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FELLOW CITIZEN

BY

CARLTON McCARTHY,

Author "Soldier Life," A. N. Va.

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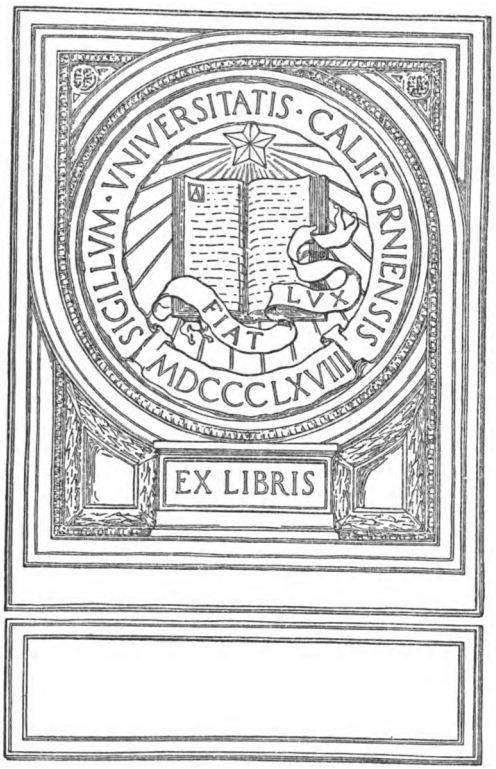

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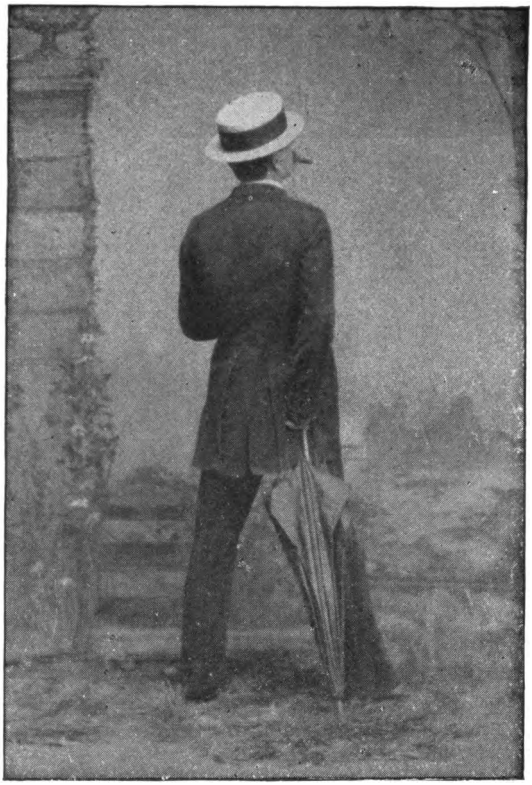

OCCASIONALLY HE HALTED ON A CORNER TO LET HIMSELF STRIKE OUT IN A NEW DIRECTION.

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OUR DISTINGUISHED FELLOW-CITIZEN

BY

CARLTON McCARTHY

AUTHOR SOLDIER LIFE A. N. VA.

"*The great are great only because we are on our knees. Let us rise!*"—PRUD'HOMME.

RICHMOND, VA.:
WHITTET & SHEPPERSON, PRINTERS

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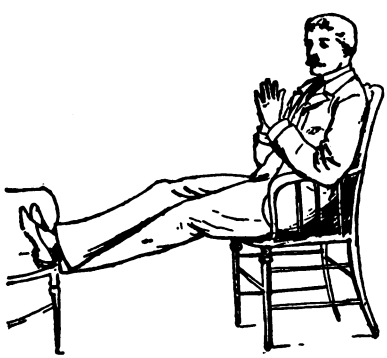
PREFACE

THE labor expended in the preparation of this story has so exhausted the resources of the author that he finds himself unable to undertake, with any hope of success, the more arduous work of writing an apology for it. The probabilities are that those who are pleased with it will prepare their own apologies, and that those who are not pleased would not accept the very best apology the author could make. Those who treat the story with indifference, or with contempt, are, of course, not entitled to any consideration from the sensitive author,



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OUR DISTINGUISHED FELLOW-CITIZEN

CHAPTER I.

SCHNEY.

IN THE cellar of a great wholesale grocery establishment where hogsheads of sugar and molasses were so numerous that all sense of their size was lost, and where the light of day, hurt at the small provision made for its entrance, would hardly go, Schney, clad in thick and everlasting garments, scraped away with a steel spade at the thick scale of molasses and dirt which had accumulated on the floor. When he had scraped together a few bushels of the obstinate material he carried it, in a huge iron vessel, to the elevator, to be hoisted out and carted away.

Mr. Schney was known to all the house, from the principal of it down to the office boy, as simply "Schney." Nobody there knew whether he was married or single, where he came from, what his past had been or his future would be; and nobody cared a copper. Schney himself knew only where he came from, and that he had a wife and children. His life was spent in the cellar with the hogsheads, and the man seemed to fit the place. Schney's advantages had been limited and peculiar, and he had

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made the most of them. He was not required by the circle in which he moved to dress well or live decently, and so he did neither. His pay was sufficient to supply all his wants. In fact, Schney saved money constantly, and as constantly lost almost everything else which makes life endurable. He was such a man that money was his only hope. His wisdom consisted of the knowledge of the fact that he was grossly ignorant and almost without what is commonly called natural ability. As he slowly accumulated money he strove to make plans for the future, but had never been able to do much more than resolve to keep what he had and save more if possible. These are simple ideas, it is true, but they constitute the foundation of many princely fortunes.

One day Schney suddenly realized the fact that he had some hundreds of dollars in bank, and it was to him a dimly pleasant idea. It is true that ten years of toil had been necessary to produce this store; but of this he did not think. His wife had been for ten years a servant of all work and his children dirty brats. But Schney was not the man to be distressed by things like these. He was so thoroughly coarse that he escaped nearly all the exquisite pains of a higher nature, and groaned only when pain racked his flesh and bones. And yet at this point in his career Schney was a comparatively decent man. At any rate he had not learned to make lying pay or meanness profitable. When he was mean or when he lied it was for the fun of the thing or because it was

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perfectly natural. He was a thief, in a small way, stealing occasionally some sugar or some molasses, but he never felt any loss of self-respect or any pain of conscience on that account, because, in fact, he had no self-respect of any appreciable quantity and no conscience sufficiently developed to suffer. But, strange to say, Schney did have a sort of ambition, and was both conceited and avaricious. And so it happened that while the steel spade, driven by his brawny arms, scraped the floor of the cellar, Mr. Schney longed for his idea of a better life. Not that he wanted rest, or time for thought, or even clean comfort, but the grandeur of a rather more independent style of life. Schney began to want to be his own "boss," with a business of his own, and to wear a white shirt and a beaver; have Sunday clothes, and be, as it were, a gentleman. He resolved that it should be so.

When the labor of the day was ended Schney reported at the office window, hat in hand, for leave to go. The junior clerk, in the same condescending tone which he had used for several years, gave a gracious consent, and the porter of the great house walked slowly homeward. When he reached his home he had been transformed by a decision and a resolve destined to change the current of his life.

That very night Mrs. Schney was informed that henceforth the direction of their family was to be upward and onward; that her husband, so long the slave of circumstances, was now about to break away from this

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most unreasonable restraint, and, though he did not so express it, tread the ascending scale. His wife had suffered long, without any hope but that which sustains mothers when they look upon their children. If a man but dares to hope, his wife instantly believes.

As in America there are no fixed degrees in the social scale, and no heights to which anything human may not aspire, there can be no pretenders. A man is what he is or what he becomes. The fact is, the law needs no precedent and fixes no principle. When, therefore, Mr. Schney determined to rise, there was nothing to oppose his progress. He was already prepared by the past to endure without pain a life which would be torture to a man descending to it. He was rising, and had already learned that decision is both comfort and power. He felt even now that he was no longer a servant, but a man. When he presented himself at bank and asked for his cash he was for the first time in his life treated with deference. It was an inspiration. From that moment his small ambition and his well-developed avarice grew side by side like twin plants, and his conceit, like another weed, grew rapidly. When the cashier shook his hand cordially and asked him to continue his very valuable account, as a sort of compliment to the bank, he planted enough vanity in the new customer to ruin him forever if he had been an ordinary man. But Schney was an extraordinary man, and the load of vanity he carried away only served to equip him for the voyage of life.

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Mr. Schney had never formulated the idea, but was nevertheless guided by that famous maxim that it is well to begin at the bottom; and who so well adapted to practice that theory as he, being then as near the bottom as a passive man ever gets? Any move he might make would surely put him at the approved starting point. Being low, ignorant, and unskilful even in crime, his only chance for success in independent conflict with the world was necessarily to come from a struggle with some element baser or weaker than himself. And so with shrewdness and modesty he selected the simplest form of business and located it in the midst of ignorance and vice, where the victims were numerous and willing, and where success seemed not merely possible, but almost certain, for a man even as stupid as he knew himself to be.

There was great rejoicing when the family moved to the new place, and the poor wife's heart beat with a new sense of happiness when she saw over the door, in beautiful golden letters, the name of Conrad Schney! Over the store were lovely rooms, as white as the plasterer's art could make them; a room for the wife and a room for their daughter, Mina, and a room for the boys—and yet another room, henceforth to be the parlor. Back of the store, for convenience, the dining-room. Everything was arranged.

At once the trade began and never slacked. From day to day, and indeed for nearly half the night, greasy coin and odorous paper money tumbled into the money-box of

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Schney, and as constantly a stream of stupefied and diseased negroes and besotted white men and women poured in and out of the busy place. The proprietor was at first astonished and then delighted at his success. He saw that his future was assured, and at once gave himself without reserve to the prosecution of his business. It never occurred to him that he was doing anything disreputable or mean. On the other hand, he was greatly pleased with himself and his business, regarding himself as an enterprising and successful merchant, and would have been greatly surprised if some rare honest man had told him the truth about himself. It would not have saved him, however, because Schney was already clothed in that impenetrable armor which all men wear who have determined, for a purpose, to abase themselves. Mr. Schney was ignorantly, but yet exactly, imitating some brilliant examples.

At the end of a month Schney again appeared at bank as a depositor. He had some vague fears about the safety of the institution, and could not rid himself of the idea that as the bank was organized by shrewd men solely for the purpose of making money, it might by some means "make" some of his money. He knew how indifferent he was himself about the mode, and was afraid that the bank, inspired by the same purpose, might be equally as unscrupulous. Such men like to see the man highest in authority. So the anxious depositor was led into the solemn quiet of the president's room, where he was re-

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ceived with soft graciousness, and had his idle fears removed to that extent that he became once more a depositor.

The president knew the sensitiveness of capital, and especially small capital, having passed through the agonies of acquisition, and though he had never been as mean as Schney—certainly not mean in the same way—he had sacrificed the best years of his life to the same ambition which now moved his new customer. He wondered when Schney was gone that he had been able to receive him so cordially and treat him so respectfully, knowing all the time what a wretched character he was, and remembering how often he had been obliged to treat far better men and even old personal friends with safe distance. But the puzzle was soon explained. The president excused and justified himself by the simple plea that he was there for business; that getting deposits was business; that a man with money to deposit ought to have recognition and deference, and that, however shameful it might be from any other standpoint, from a business standpoint Schney was entitled to polite consideration as a successful man and promising customer of the bank. On the other hand, the president felt that it was his duty to guard the bank against many well-meaning and respectable people who, not being so utterly lost to principle or so enterprising as Schney, would probably never do as well. The great burden of the president's life was an ever present dread that some man admirable in every other way, but

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as yet a little weak financially, would drop in on him and ask a favor with a risk attached. His ideal community would never be realized until all the people learned to make, save, and deposit, and borrow only on collaterals.

A man cannot be a good bank president without letting go some parts of himself for which he will sigh and sigh in vain as the end approaches, nor without accumulating some traits which will mysteriously and persistently separate him from his fellow-men. It appears that every man must choose his part, there being a limit to what each may have. Men imagine that they add constantly to their possessions, while, in fact, the new acquirements simply crowd out the older and many times the sweeter treasures; and a being who was in early life furnished bountifully by the Master with the necessaries of a happy and a healthy life, fills himself with husks and dies among the swine.

Schney's credit was soon established not only in the bank, but everywhere. Men who would have blushed to put the thought into words trusted him cheerfully, because they knew that a man who had gone down into the depths as he had would make money and pay promptly. Prompt pay hideth a multitude of sins.

Schney loved neither virtue nor vice. He studied in his dull way the capacity of each to produce money, and learned that for rude hands like his vice was the best tool. He flattered his most abandoned customers, and encouraged them in anything wicked which yielded them

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pleasure and brought him profit. He could see that the debauchery must be a source of profit to somebody, and taking a simple business view of the matter, made haste to monopolize all the material within his reach. Business is business always, and sometimes crime.

Against the advice of his wife Schney added a room and a few tables for convenient gambling, and made extensive and costly improvements about his place. If ever there was a thoroughly complacent and hopeful man, Schney was. What more could a man wish who could see his business prospering, and who knew that the basest and strongest passions of human nature and all the powers of evil were pledged for his success. Schney knew all this, and acted upon it, but he would never have dreamed of expressing it exactly so.

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CHAPTER II.

MINA.

FOR a long time Mrs. Schney was forced to be near the business, and to know much of its vile associations. Though her nature revolted, she submitted like a good wife, and was silent. At last her patience was rewarded, and she received her freedom. "Pauline," said Schney, "I have a man hired for the bar, and now you will take care of the house and children."

It was a proud day—a man in his employment! So now the wife drifted away from the business, and saw it only in its results: servants, handsome dresses, better furniture, more rest, and even some leisure. Her husband seemed to be happy, though rude and overbearing, and, all things considered, and in contrast with the past, was generous, and even indulgent. One creditable thing he did in keeping Mina away from the low frequenters of his bar and store. He loved the girl, and had good reason to be proud of her beauty and intelligence and amiability. He had no idea that she would ever be useful to him or ever necessary to the success of his plans.

At the public school Mina saw other girls who seemed poorer than herself, and not so well dressed, who had some mysterious charm of manner and of voice which she could not assume or imitate. At times it seemed to

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be only pride or vanity; but their kindness and courtesy contradicted that thought. She longed to be like those girls with the mysterious, quiet air, and confessed to her mother that there was something about them which made her dissatisfied with herself. Her mother comforted her with the assurance that if she would be patient she would yet learn the secret and be the equal of her schoolmates.

The mother had already learned that a man rises in the social scale more readily than a woman, though the woman be his wife or his daughter. She saw her husband was on good terms with men whose wives would never recognize her or ever forget the porter's wife. The poor woman, being greatly superior to her husband, was keenly sensitive where he was utterly indifferent. She cheered and encouraged her daughter, and smilingly predicted a happy future for her, but recognized the difficulties which would meet her in the way, and would be made even greater and more dangerous by the rapid rise of her father. The wife and mother questioned in her heart the desirability of their surprising good fortune. She did many weary hours of thinking, which the wizards of the pen would have been glad to seize and fasten to paper and place to their own credit. She is a base woman, indeed, whose thoughts do not take on beauty when her children are the theme. Mothers are now the only workers of miracles.

Every day Mina went to school, and three times a week she had a music lesson from a famous paralytic professor,

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who laid at full length on his bed and made angelic music on the guitar. He trained her head and her fingers and her voice for the pay he received, and because he was kind, he taught her a graceful carriage, a proper accent, some rules of etiquette, and some rudiments of dancing. Whenever she left him he would say, "What eyes! what eyes!"

Of course this chance to rise out of her surroundings came from her mother, and had only the consent of her father. Mrs. Schney had an inner guide which served her well through all her days of deep poverty, and was now leading her with wonderful wisdom through all the novel experiences of sudden prosperity. She recalled daily the patient example of her mother, whom she remembered as a silver-haired old lady, with a soft, round face, and a gentle, pathetic voice, who was always scrupulously neat and never idle—Pauline Boom, the baker's widow and successor to his business. She remembered the little shop over which her mother presided, and how respectful were all the customers who came to buy. Though but a little thing when her mother died, she had seen that there was in her something which prevailed over her poverty and which commanded the respect of all her neighbors, rich and poor. Then she recalled her mother's hatred of dirt and squalor, and her heroic fight with all the downward tendencies of poverty. All the motherly counsel of her own childhood came back in misty fragments, and with patient effort she reshaped it

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all, beautified it with her own added love, and pressed it upon her daughter. And so the old woman, who had been good and true and brave, but who had not been spared to guide her own child, was laying hold of the grandchild and shaping her character and destiny.

The odds were against the girl. The mother, though ready to make any sacrifice for her, was compelled to submit passively to the slightest whim of the father, whose desire for indepedence and freedom from toil had now become insatiable greed for money and furious and impatient desire for recognition as a man of energy and business sense. As is too often the case with far better men, Schney was all smiles and good humor to his customers and the public, but absent, irritable, and unreasonable with his family. He had a secret fear that his wife would never concede his greatness, and that she would measure him always by a standard rather different from that which the public would apply. He would have complained of Mina's advantages, and would probably have put an end to them, but for the fact that he imagined himself rapidly rising in favor with the world, and therefore without occasion for envy. Mina, he thought, would be pretty and accomplished, but her father would be rich. Having thus made himself comfortable, he allowed the mother to go on with her plans.

While the father with feverish energy pushed his trade, and in the foul atmosphere of his place laughed and joked with his polluted customers and victims, the

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mother, seated in the quiet of a chamber as neat as toil could make it, strove to weave about her children a strong defense against the future. Mina, though she did not know why, felt that her mother was her only and indispensable friend, and was never dissatisfied when gazing into her face, and listening to the magic tones of her voice. She loved her father, too, and was always ready to give him the sweetest evidence of it, but he could not, being the man he was, give her in return anything which was fully the love she craved. And here were the first fruits of the determined, and so far successful, effort of a man to rise by throwing aside the burden of principle: A silenced wife and a daughter studying the mystery of her unwilling estrangement from her father.

Mina welcomed the return of music day, and went gladly to the chamber of the old professor, where she had always a hearty welcome. The old man complimented her in French or Italian or German, as the fancy struck him or the language seemed most expressive, and loved her more and more. Then he loaned her his choicest books, and by adroit conversation induced her to read. Sometimes she met at his bedside well-educated men, friends of the professor, who had travelled in foreign lands, whose conversation revealed to her the extent and variety of the world and of life, and created in her the hope that change of some sort and new forms of happiness would soon be hers.

At home, resting her head on her mother's knee, she

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MINA AND HER INDISPENSABLE FRIEND.

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told with childish satisfaction all she had heard, and described all the people she had met. Her mother listened, and though some of the things so new and inspiring to the child were old memories to her, she never tired of the dreamy talk or the eager hopes it betrayed.

Sometimes the mother feared it might be treason to Conrad to let her aspirations loose, and worse than treason to train his daughter for a life which he could never share. She did not know that he had his reward, and that he would never feel, much less charge to any one, the defection. In fact, his life was already revolutionized so completely that the simple comforts which had formerly satisfied him so that he scarcely had a wish beyond them were now merely distasteful interruptions to the continuous excitement of gain. His daughter pleased and interested him, but was more a part of his future glory than of his present comfort.

Mina innocently compared herself with the people who lived immediately about her own home, and with those who frequented her father's place, and wondered why their poverty and degradation should be so great while her father's family lived in ease and enjoyed abundantly the comforts of life. In a dim way she felt that possibly her father ought to live elsewhere, but never suspected that they were located by his deliberate choice. Having seen but a single point of the better life outside of her circle, and being familiar with the scenes about her, she did not feel very sharply, nor was she moved to the

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point of remonstrance, but only pondered the matter. Music, and occasional contact with the outside world at the Professor's home, and what she saw and felt and appropriated at school, rather than what she learned there, had stimulated inquiry and comparisons, and had, moreover, forever destroyed that happy illusion that there is no place like home. She had never seen the homes of the rich, and had no clear conception of what they might be; but, seeing and feeling the charm of the manner of those she had met, and noticing that they always dwelt upon the pleasures of life rather than the grinding demands of it, which was the theme at her home, she imagined, poor thing, that they were happy always, and that their homes must be not only beautiful, but scenes of continuous affection and peace.

Schney was doing, for want of sense, what many others do and call it wise. He was preparing his child to despise him and to pity her mother. It may be, possibly is, an incalculable advantage to the State and to the people at large to have all the people lifted out of ignorance, but the first decade of universal education in any land must produce a youthful community whose first assertion of self and of superiority will include shame at the mention of their parents and contempt for all recorded wisdom. A man who despises his mother will steal. A girl who despises her father and pities her mother's ignorance *may* be saved. But what must be the anguish of a mother when she sees the glitter of contempt in the eyes of her

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daughter? The people of England have had some experience of life. They discourage rapid transition from one condition in life to a higher or even better one. They establish levels of existence and populate them with assorted masses who tread the level, father and son, for generations in peace and contentment. In rare cases exceptional qualities shoot a man or woman from a lower to a higher plane; sometimes to an eminence. But the rule is life on a level.

America has experimented for a century with the opposite extreme, and has as a result millions of commonplace people, who never stop to ascertain their present worth, or even to cleanse themselves, but ask, with breathless impatience, from day to day: "What shall I be?" And so the poor struggle and die; the rich envy the great, and are miserable; the great are belittled, and rush out of life followed by shouts of derision and volumes of calumny. No man dares to rest or be contented. The universal demand is that every man must better his condition. The man who is in repose is a burden; a contented man an imbecile. Men with millions of money apply their whole stock of nerve-power to the acquirement of more money, and actually starve to death. Others drop dead—suicides. The decree has gone forth that no man shall rest. Contentment is branded as un-American. Enterprise, grown to monster size, feeds insatiably on every other virtue. He who was once the slave of his master has a nation of wild men to drive him and scourge him

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with restless and merciless opinions out of his lazy content into a life and a strife which must fill him with new and strange suffering, and make him soon the most pathetic object on earth.

If men, who seem to be the chief victims of the new civilization, were the only victims, Heaven might spare the nation; but Mina and her mother, once the serene girl, Pauline Boom, are entangled in the life of the husband and father, and will not escape without a burden of memories which will present themselves unbidden and mingle persistently with thoughts entitled ordinarily to select company and safety from intruders. Unfortunately, when men and women rise to exclusiveness and bar the door to repulsive and unwelcome people, their past lives, secreted within, ramble about the house and grin and chatter, and even step out and join the dance and play familiar with the guests—a sort of licensed ghosts.

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CHAPTER III.

A Suspicion.

SUNDAY was Schney's gala day. He went regularly to church in the morning, and afterwards walked from place to place receiving the congratulations and the admiration of less fortunate people. He congratulated himself on the shrewdness he had displayed in the selection of a business, and often wondered why more people had not followed his example. He felt constantly that he had made a wonderful escape from poverty, and that it was simple stupidity and lack of enterprise on the part of others which gave him the field. Consequently he was careful to speak in a rather depreciatory manner of his prospects, and quite modestly, with a humorous suggestion to the contrary, of his gains. He bore with him, as it were, the great secret of success.

Mr. Schney was therefore greatly chagrined when, on stepping out one bright Sunday morning, he found both the front and side door of his place sealed and guarded, and the rear door in charge of a policeman, who treated his anxious inquiries with great indifference. His move toward the door with the intention of entering it was promptly checked, and for once in his life he felt that he had suffered an indignity. During the day, by persistent inquiry, he gathered the facts, and finally went home.

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His wife and daughter, already informed by the gossips of the neighborhood, had abandoned the house, leaving a note to the effect that they had fled to the shelter of Professor Snuff's house. Schney was too much alarmed to follow them, and yet miserable and lonely. He was tortured by conflicting desires to stay and guard his premises, to go and look after his wife and daughter, and to escape from the fearful thoughts which the place engendered. The police, he thought were unusually calm and indifferent. He knew all the facts as far as ascertained, and fairly writhed with forebodings sitting all alone in his chamber.

The night before a woman, abandoned and forsaken by humanity in general, lay dying, attended by a physician who at this crisis was her only friend. Only a man inspired, as some physicians are, with superhuman pity, could feel the awful misery of a wretch who died and could not frame or imagine an apology for her life, and who accepted without remonstrance the most cruel fate Omnipotence even could impose on flesh and blood. Counting heaven and earth, she had two friends to hear and pity her—the doctor on earth, and in heaven the sinner's Friend. These two attend all who die, whether king, emperor, or pauper, and are partners. They are always in place to be leaned upon.

The physician sat in the disordered, shabby room almost in darkness, gazing upon the poor disfigured face, and listening to the muttered ravings of his patient. At

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last he found that she repeated constantly and with wonderful accuracy of detail the same story. With all his skill on the watch, with a vast experience behind it, he could not decide whether the story was a revelation of fact or the mere phanatasies of a dying brain. He immediately sent for a magistrate, who came at once, bringing with him the chief of police.

The trio concluded that the narrative was too explicit and realistic to proceed from a disordered brain, and as they strove by questioning to extract every detail the patient seemed to be more and more rational. They noted carefully the whole story.

The woman had been a frequenter of Schney's place, and was evidently familiar with the worst characters who assembled there. She had witnessed many violent scenes, and had more than once been cruelly beaten and thrust into the street, more dead than alive. She described minutely the appearance of a stranger who entered the place at midnight, and asked for information of a kind which betrayed his ignorance of the city and of the place he had entered. He was invited into the back room on some pretense, and detained there by some of Schney's friends until they had a conference. Very soon he became visibly uneasy and restless, and with an awkward apology rose to go. At that instant he received a blow on the back of his head, and fell, without a word or a groan, dead on the floor. She could not say who struck the blow. The bar was overturned, a pit dug under the floor, and the body

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buried. Everything was arranged as before, and all departed, she being warned that her life depended on her silence. Here the story ended.

The chief of police hurried away, and by day-break the ominous seals were on the doors and the officers on guard. Idlers surrounded the house and gazed with tireless interest at the sealed doors and the serene policemen. Within could be heard the rumble of moving furniture, the ripping and splitting of planks, and steady strokes of pick and shovel. The evening came, and darkness, but still the work went on, the gas-jets within the bar blazing, and the small openings in the blinds allowing occasional glimpses of the workmen and partial views of glass and silverware. One lewd picture stood out prominently under the brilliant light, and mocked, with painted smiles, the ghastly scene.

Schney remained in his room all through the weary day, and, despite the presence of his boys and their brave efforts to cheer and comfort him, felt that his business was ruined. When night came on his fears increased. He made determined efforts to exclude the horrors of the day from his thoughts, and to plan his future, but failed. At last he confessed that he was helpless and afraid, and made his boys come into his room, and sleep there. In the morning he consulted the boys about everything, and was happy when they decided for him. He ate his breakfast with some effort, and it was plain he tasted nothing. Afterwards he smoked and waited.

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About midday the chief of police called for Schney, and made him happy in a moment. With a cheerful and rather jovial air he said: "Well, Schney, it was all a lie. The woman must have been crazy. We dug a well, almost, under your place, and not a bone or a rag can we find. Go down and open your shop, and don't bother about it any more. You are all right now, old fellow. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye! I thank you very much," said Schney. "Come and have something?"

"Not on this particular occasion," said the chief, with a compound smile, as he turned and walked away, whistling softly, and absorbed in a matter not in the remotest sense connected with the events of that day.

Schney was greatly relieved. He expected to resume business at once, and, though in a rather dejected way, he commenced to re-arrange his place of business, but by bed-time his courage had forsaken him. The absence of his wife and daughter, and their evident determination not to return, depressed him and made him astonishingly susceptible to the disgraceful insinuations and suspicious inquisitiveness of the heartless wretches who were on the most familiar terms with him.

He closed his place with a sense of relief, and went directly to consult his wife and daughter. His wife met him with passionate sobs and an affection free from suspicion. Mina with one kiss extracted the pain from his heart. He announced his resolve to move his business

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to a better place and to provide a home elsewhere for his family.

The next day he sold out. The papers all declared him innocent, and deplored the strange conduct of the dying woman and the consequent unjust suspicion of Schney. After a few days the man who was supposed to be dead, and who had been missing, reappeared, explained his absence, and joined the multitude who were inquiring into the mysterious cause of the dying woman's statement. Schney once more assumed a business air.

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ENTERPRISE

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CHAPTER IV.

ENTERPRISE.

A MAN relieved of a burden straightens himself and immediately forgets how he groaned under the load. Torn by force from the old surroundings which had seemed so securely fixed, Schney's pain would have been great but for the presence of awful fears. When these were relieved he found that he was not, after all, ruined, and was possibly benefited. There was at least time to look about, and a chance for new ventures, with possibly greater success.

The return of his wife and daughter, Schney felt, was a pre-requisite to any further plans for life, and this decided him to please and astonish his wife by revealing to her a fact which he had sedulously kept from her knowledge.

"Pauline," he said, "do you remember the house where the people lived named Braxton? It is mine!"

"Why, papa," exclaimed his wife, "you are now only dreaming. That fine yard, with trees and flowers, and such a house, is worth a fortune."

"So," replied Conrad, "but I have it paid for already, and you and Mina must come home to that place, in which is now all the furniture and many other things."

Mina was sure that all this joyful news had been foreshadowed by the hopeful words of her mother.

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The house was once the abode of a man of means, who had built it with more regard to comfort than show, but had made it beautiful on the interior with the carving and metal work of half a century ago. It was in its day a notable home, but had long since been abandoned on account of its unfortunate location. The neighborhood had fallen into bad repute, values had steadily declined, and Schney became its owner for an amount scarcely equal to the original cost of the wood-work of the main staircase and carved mantels. Old trees swung their huge arms around the eaves, and as they rolled and turned in the wind seemed to wring their hands over the changes they had witnessed. Flowers bloomed in the yard as much out of date as knee pants or cocked hats, their names even unknown to the modern passer-by. Shrubbery grew in profusion, and gave forth strange, old-fashioned odors, which, drifting into the nostrils of any decrepit old lingerer in the town, transported him at once to the gay scenes of his youth, and recalled the rosy cheeks of the sweetheart and wife mouldered into dust a quarter of a century ago.

Schney and his family were no sooner fixed than they had the pleasure of enjoying the respect of the neighbors, which was plainly to be seen, without feeling at all the envy which was concealed. This purchase, and a few timely suggestions from an energetic real estate man, called the attention of the new owner to the possibilities of judicious investments in that line, and he resolved that

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in the future he would not allow a bargain to escape him without a reasonable effort to capture it.

A long-neglected corner, around which a stream of people constantly flowed, now became the scene of action. It was evident to every observant man who passed that capital had seized upon the spot, and was enamored of it. Brick-masons knocked the front into a pile of ruins, and replaced it with the airy and graceful work of the iron-founder and glazier; cunning workmen touched every point on the inside with skill and taste; fountains of water gushed out wherever wanted, and light streamed over all; birds sung in gilded cages; rare plants bloomed everywhere, and light-hearted customers came and went. The place was complete in all its appointments. Schney, his features somewhat refined by responsibility and thought, more subdued in manner and more dignified, presided. He was sober, indisposed to light conversation, attentive to every detail. He realized that he was in the front rank of the trade. It may not be easy to account for or describe, but every one knows that prosperous people soon possess a sort of surface refinement which not only affects their carriage with confidence and ease of manner, but slowly and by some mysterious means effaces physical blemishes and tones up the countenance. Schney was by this time a man of rather unassuming manners, quietly but richly dressed—not unwilling to be considered influential, and decidedly interested in public affairs. His friends were numerous and influential, and many of them

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were practically his property. Men once distinguished for learning and ability, dragged by vice from their exalted positions, flattered him and patronized him, and imagined that Schney, overpowered by their dignity and importance, would never press his bills. Schney understood the scheme perfectly, and in turn knew that the unpaid bills and the slowly accomplished familiarity of his great customers would eventually yield him a harvest amply remunerative. His great card in a social way was a man of fine appearance—once a lawyer of acknowledged ability—called by courtesy "the Judge," but now reduced by his habits to poverty and mental wreck. It was a queer sight to see this pair of worthies fencing. Each imagined the other in his power. One vain of dignities long since and forever passed away, and the other sniffing the aroma of distant but approaching honors.

"Well, Conrad, how are you?" the Judge would say. "How is your good wife and Mina? Well, I hope?"

"Ah, Judge, come in, come in; have a seat, please, and—Charlie! Bring some ice and Apollinaris to the Judge, quick, please—what will you have with me? It is my treat—no, no, you shall not pay; old friends, ha, ha, ha! Quite well, all at my house; and Mina! why, you should see that little girl. Take a cigar, and here is a light. So!"

By this time the Judge is quite settled. His face wears an expression as varied as any landscape. Benevolent condescension, modest appreciation of the elegance and

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comfort of his surroundings, conscious dignity, and slight reserve, all play over his rather damaged countenance.

"Schney, you rascal," says the Judge, now with a painful effort to be playful, "you have a fine place and you are doing well. I am glad to see it—glad to—see it. I wish you well, my man; indeed I do! Thank you, that will do; but a little water, please. Ah! ha, ha, ahum!"

"Yes; but I have a large expense to keep up, Judge—a large expense. And taxes are quite immense enough to drive a man out of such a business. I am working always for the city government," said Schney, "and have now not much saved by a lifetime. Have a light."

"It is true," the Judge replied, "our taxes are enormous. We need good practical business men in the Council. You are an intelligent, wide-awake man, and you have property. Why not run?"

"Do you think so—that I have some chance to come in with those fellows?"

"By all (hic) means; why, certainly, friend Conrad. I should welcome you to public (hic) life with pleasure; why, yes!"

Schney threw an admiring glance at the Judge, and was about to enter into a more confidential chat, when a firm friend of his came briskly in, exclaiming:

"Ho! Conrad, my boy, and Judge, I salute you! A pocket full of items, but still needy, gentlemen. Charlie, a schooner for me and whiskey for the Judge! Have you heard the latest? Filter dropped dead an hour ago, and

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all the pious snobs declare it was whiskey that killed him."

"What nonzens," answered Schney; "it must be a heart disease, or some such thing."

"Why, certainly," said the reporter. "What kills the pious people—do they live any longer? I will have a good local to-morrow, anyway. I am sure of that, at least."

"A good liquor will not hurt a man," said Schney.

"And my good friend here keeps no other. Gentlemen, good evening. Conrad, my regards to Madame." And so saying, Judge Dragg walked slowly out, his gait suggesting the idea that he wore rubber cushions or feather pillows under his shoes; a soft, slow step, betraying uncertainty as to the exact moment when his feet touched the floor; a sad, aimless movement, made all the more pitiable by fragments of the old dignity which dangled about him like dead leaves awaiting the next blast of winter.

Next came a troop of handsome boys, all the bravery of evening dress hidden under huge spring overcoats, homeward bound. Oysters, beer, cigars—a merry laugh—the ring of silver coin upon the marble counter—voices dying away in the distance.

"And so Filter is dead," said Schney, approaching the reporter.

"Yes, dead as the devil! You have lost a customer, Conrad."

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"Of course, yes. I am glad I was always friendly to him, Mr. Bursting," said Schney, and added with a pathetic air, "I never could refuse that poor fellow a drink."

"He is an independent man now," dryly remarked the reporter.

"How so?" said Schney.

But the reporter was too busy with his notes to answer, and Mr. Schney slipped quietly into a big easy chair and a reverie.

Only the scratch of the reporter's pen, the singing of the gas-jets, and the occasional snapping of the arc light, until the melancholy tolling of a distant bell came stealing softly in with stately steps, announcing, as though reluctantly, that the record of another day was now complete, and illustrating the ability of a cracked station-house bell and a sleepy policeman to produce very weird effects when aided by the necessary accessories of midnight and an uneasy conscience.

Filter, coffined, lay peacefully in his little parlor, while a few of his intimates kept a silent watch in the adjoining room. Death was not in their line, and conversation was impossible. Their friend had indulged in a novelty which they could not appreciate or even discuss with any degree of satisfaction. He had gone off on a solitary expedition, and seemed for once to be really indifferent about his old chums. It seemed rather mean and awkward, but they all agreed that they would have to leave him in the hands of the preacher. Upstairs the widow wrestled with alternate grief and despair. Schney thought of these things.

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The reporter calmly wrote up his account of Filter's sudden death, and, feeling that he had done a neat piece of work, sprang from his seat and gaily departed. The double-hinged doors flapped restlessly in and out for a moment and then quietly closed.

Schney walked thoughtfully homeward. The death of Filter insisted upon having his attention. He considered such a death as that rather undesirable, and to be avoided if possible. In fact, Mr. Schney concluded that death in any form was not a reasonable thing, and especially unreasonable and annoying to people like himself, busy and prosperous, and willing and anxious to live. It occurred to him that possibly, very probably, these people who die are not so anxious to live as they ought to be, or perhaps they would go on living as he did. He was unwilling to admit that people would die so constantly and with such apparent ease unless they were careless on the subject. When the thought struck him that possibly after all death was a compulsory affair, and that the time might be fixed and near, he sought to comfort and encourage himself by resolving that he would make it known at once that he was for long life and prosperity. Filter, he decided, must have been a great fool to die that way.

And so, the world over, men who are deluged with blessings, and guarded on all sides from the countless ills of the multitude, gradually learn to flatter themselves, and console themselves with the thought that those who fall into disgrace and death, or live in humiliation and pain,

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are people more or less indifferent about life, and very careless about comfort. They walk serenely a flowery path, which in their wisdom they have chosen, and wonder that so many choose the rocky way and death over the precipice. They steadily and even cheerfully agree that death may be a great relief to some people, and have no doubt that there is some mysterious charm in calamity and in anguish which draws weak people irresistibly. Preferring the happier modes of life, they wisely shun disagreeable things, and regret briefly and occasionally the wilful misery of the people about them. It annoys them. Sometimes they become indignant at its persistence, and impatient at the thought that it hovers about their pathway, casting shadows and uttering doleful cries. As a last resort they harden their hearts.

Schney, when he closed the door of his house behind him, and thus shut out the world, resolved that he would as effectually, if possible, shut out of his life every thought of yielding to death. If the choice of ease and a firm resolve to live would help matters at all, then he wanted it understood that Conrad Schney was no sentimental candidate for death, or believer in the imaginary content of poverty and obscurity.

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CHAPTER V.

A Municipal Campaign.

TWO men, whose dress and carriage gave instant proof of their position, walked side by side, engaged in earnest conversation. At short intervals they looked each other intently in the face and emphasized their words with smiles or frowns. Once, carried away by the importance and fervor of their talk, they halted, faced each other, reached a satisfactory understanding, and then, plunged in thought, resumed their walk in silence. They were good citizens, agitated and distressed at the political outlook, and resolved at any sacrifice of time and prejudice to strike for the welfare of the community. They were worthy representatives of the party in power, and that party—the only hope of the city—was in danger of complete overthrow. The better element of the city had a small and decreasing majority, now about to be destroyed by the defection of hitherto loyal adherents, who imagined that their peculiar interests were about to be sacrificed for victory. The varied interests of the people were in collision and emitting heat at every point of contact. Conciliation was demanded everywhere. At such a time every influence of sufficient extent to effect results must have recognition. It matters not if it is in itself what is commonly called an evil influence. The question is simply

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whether it carries with it votes, and holds them in a thraldom greater than the party feeling. Men who represent an interest are therefore to be recognized and valued, not so much with reference to personal worth as to their possible control of others.

Schney's house being in the centre of disaffection, and its owner a warm party man, had been selected as the place for a meeting of leaders called for the settlement of vexed questions and the conciliation of those whose alarm had turned to active rebellion. It was evident that the illiterate, the poor, the foreign element, and the vicious classes of the community had by some means been convinced that the party of their allegiance was drifting away from sympathy with them, and lending itself too freely to the advancement of those whom fortune had favored already quite liberally. Such a condition of affairs called for an immediate cure. The party must be saved. Men, therefore, whose main reliance for support and whose only chance of aggrandizement rested upon party life and party success, were ready to make any concession which would avert the threatened disaster. Others, who had no political aspirations, but yet felt the necessity for party success left the matter in the hands of the active workers, and were willing to accept favorable results without severe scrutiny of the means to the end. The indifference of the people disgusted the leaders, and the interminable turmoil and strife stirred up by the leaders exhausted the patience and the interest of the people. The liquor in-

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terest was on the alert, and ready to strike down any suspicious wanderer about the camp. It demanded the pass-word from all, and urged its friends to decorate themselves with its colors and bear themselves bravely. Temperance men and fanatics denounced the liquor trade, and lovers of religious freedom defended it. Labor glared at Capital, and Capital buttoned itself up to the chin, and with lofty strides and puffed cheeks passed by unconscious of the rage it had stirred.

The two men slowly making their way to Schney's house were alike only in that they were politicians. Mr. Grit was a young lawyer with a good practice, learned and safe, betraying energy in every movement. He was quiet, cool, and quick. He believed in direct action and success at any cost. His companion was a Mr. Estimate, who was gradually retiring from business and devoting more and more of his time to public affairs. Though comparatively a young man he wore a solemn aspect, walked slowly along with bent head, and seemed either older or wiser than most men of his age. He thought much and deeply, was always willing to hear, and could remain silent without an effort. It was pretty generally understood that Mr. Estimate was a reliable man in a public emergency, and that when necessary, he could use persuasion with irresistible effect. The two combined in an effort, rendered success almost certain.

As they neared the house, Grit seemed to be a little reluctant, and finally said:

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"See here, Estimate, that place is brilliantly lighted, and I see women at the windows. My visit here is strictly for business, and—"

"That is so," replied Estimate, "but we must take things as we find them, and shape them up afterwards, if we can. If the new statesman is bent on an entertainment, we must turn it to some account."

"Dem it!" said Grit.

Estimate would wade through difficulties and succeed where his legal friend would fail. He regarded the possibility of a supper and company as an annoyance which demanded patience, but, at the same time, afforded a competent man innumerable opportunities to advance his cause.

Our friends were late. In the handsome parlor they found an interesting circle of gentlemen, representing every creed, trade, business, profession, and secret order in the city, each impressed with the idea that he was there to play some important part. Mr. Estimate, though apparently a guest, had aided the host in compiling the list of invitations. Schney introduced each comer to the company, and was unusually happy and proud. At length he said, with some embarrassment:

"Gentleman, before we go to business, let us come to supper first."

At the words, the heavy doors rolled out of sight and exposed to view in an adjoining room of handsome dimensions a long table artistically dressed and bearing a

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really grand supper. Mr. Grit groaned inwardly, and cast anxious glances towards the outer door, as though he would gladly escape, while Estimate swept the scene with a glance and braced himself for the task before him.

The supper was an example of the skill of the fine cooks at Schney's restaurant, extended and elaborated by the confections and taste of Monsieur Pitchin, a professional caterer, indispensable in fashionable circles. Schney's bright mulatto waiters, who had served in years gone by as butlers in gentlemen's houses, now dressed in snowy white, moved noiselessly about, dispensing the grand fare and obeying, with graceful speed, the slightest nod or wink or cough of the host. All were captured. Mina had welcomed every guest, laying a soft hand in the palm of each one as he entered, and shooting happy glances from half-closed eyes in every direction. When all were seated, she vanished.

Mr. Estimate adroitly directed the conversation into the desired channel, and Mr. Grit helped him to keep it there. Mr. Schney appeared to be simply drifting with the current.

At the conclusion of the supper, an alderman of some years' experience, proposed the health of "our host and worthy friend," to which all responded heartily, and the company returned to the parlor for cigars and business.

"Make yourself at home, gentlemen," said Schney; "smoke as much as you please and do not fear—my wife has given me the house for one night. I move, gentle-

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men, Mr. Estimate take the chair; all right? all agreed; very well. Mr. Estimate, please take it."

On taking the chair, Mr. Estimate said: "I am very glad to meet my friends here to consult together for the best interests of our party and of our beautiful city. I am sure that we all desire the same thing, and that we only need to understand each other in order to have perfect harmony. It is necessary, in order to carry this large and intelligent ward for our party, that we should have as our standard-bearer some well-known citizen of character and influence. If we could agree upon some one here to-night, I think we would take a step in the direction of victory!"

Mr. Estimate was not accidental chairman, nor was it spontaneous patriotism which brought Mr. Grit to his feet the moment the chairman sat down. Grit fearlessly denounced anybody and everybody who allowed any selfish interest to affect their party allegiance and closed with the assurance that he "felt safe in the use of strong language in the company of men all tried and true, and ready to sacrifice anything save honor for the triumph of the grand principles for which they were contending." He wanted, he said, "a thorough party ticket, with thorough party men on it, so that the great triumph, now almost certain, might be beyond question, a *party* triumph."

Estimate listened with rapt attention, so the company said, but was really so near asleep that he started, like a man waking from a trance, when Grit concluded his remarks.

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These brief addresses were followed by some lively discussions, perfectly natural on the part of those engaged, but carefully manipulated by a few of the initiated. After a moment of silence the alderman again rose and said in a voice as musical and soft as Erin's harp:

"Mr. Charyreman, I believe, upon my soul, I do, indeed, that we could not do a wiser, or I might say, sor, a more prudent thing, than to nommynayte our worthy friend who has so handsomely entertained us to-night, sor, in his palatial ho—residence. Schney, sor, and victory is the same thing identically in this place!"

There was a soft clapping of hands. Grit swallowed something which seemed to be large, and cleared his throat in a manner almost equivalent to saying "damn!" and then perspired. Estimate, with a cat-like glide, got to Schney in an instant, took him by the hand, and in about eight, certainly not more than ten or twelve words, expressed his congratulations and conviction that all would be well.

At the door Schney's carriage waited for the two leaders. Estimate glided in, and was seated instantly; but Grit hesitated, and would have insisted on walking home, but for the fact that Schney was there to see and push him in. As the vehicle rolled away, Grit said, between his teeth: "Hell!"

Estimate asked, in a rather drowsy way: "What did you remark?"

"I say," answered Grit, "that we are in a devil of a

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mess. Won't all the temperance people stir around and raise a storm if we insist on using Schney?"

"Why should they? They were represented to-night. Old man Febrile is one of their leading men, and Major Borax is a paid lecturer. They both seemed to be satisfied."

"But the preachers, Estimate, and the church people. How will you hold them down? They will see through the whole thing, and——"

"Submit to it," broke in Estimate with energy, straightening up, and getting really interested. "The churches dare not go into politics. I have thought over that matter thoroughly."

"Can we hold Schney to party measures after we put him in?"

"We *must* hold him."

"How?"

"By advancing him, by flattering his vanity, and, if necessary, by really recognizing and rewarding his influence. By the way, you must see that he is properly noticed by the press, and added to our committee.

"What? put him on the committee?"

"Why, certainly; he is irresistible in his ward—that is to say, so long as the better people there keep their disgust for politics."

"He is a thoroughly low dog, is he not?"

"Well, yes, his enemies say so; but think what he has accomplished. Do you know that his wealth is consid-

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erable, and that he is a large real estate owner? You must admit that Schney is not so bad as he is painted. His success must mean *something.*"

Grit retired, feeling dissatisfied with himself, and in spite of determined efforts to compose himself and sleep, reviewed, criticised, approved, and disapproved the work of the night, until he felt as if he was on the verge of insanity.

Estimate calmly disrobed, deliberately laid away each garment, slipped in smoothly between the sheets, adjusted his head, made a slight change in the position of his weary legs, moved one elbow just a little, and—fell asleep.

It is only in romances that the intriguer or the villain tosses on a sleepless bed. In real life it is the man of tender conscience who does the rolling, magnifying in the mysterious hours of night every failing of the day into crime, and longing for the return of another day in which to fight more desperately for the attainment of his high ideal. Possibly the most marked characteristics of accomplished rascals are composure, cheerfulness, and confidence, or utter indifference. Virtue, integrity, and fidelity furnish the world with tears and guard the sleep of criminals.

The next day the party paper announced that "at a meeting of some prominent citizens held last night at the residence of one of the leading business men of the Seventeenth ward, Mr. Conrad Schney was urged to announce himself for the Council, and has, we are glad to learn,

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consented to allow the use of his name. Mr. Schney is one of the most successful merchants in that thriving portion of our city, and is recognized as a man of sterling integrity, tireless energy, and any amount of good business sense. We are glad to know that he is a staunch party man, and well deserves his good fortune as well as the hearty support of all good citizens."

During the day, counting both private and public perusals, Schney read the notice fifty times, and went to bed at last with the beautiful sentences at his tongue's end.

Estimate and Grit laid aside law and business on election day, and each in his own way, went to work to keep everybody and everything in smooth working order. They knew well enough that the decent people would gladly spurn their candidate, who was simply a bait for the malcontents, and that they must be held together by the usual party prophecies that defeat meant ruin. The people showed some disposition to meddle, as it is called, with the arrangements which the leaders had so laboriously made, and were discussing, in their usual helpless way, the candidates and the combinations, always concluding that they must submit either to their terrible enemies or the terrible candidates of their friends.

Old Febrile, the temperance leader, whose fortune consisted of large interests in several lodges and circles which had never even proposed to pay any dividends, crawled around, giving his hands a constant dry wash, and bewailing in quavering tones, the fearful demoralization of

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the day. Having nothing whatever to lose, and having long since abandoned every hope of gain, he boldly and truthfully denounced the nomination of Schney as an outrage upon the community. Of course, nobody listened to him.

Major Borax, decorated with a large, rich ribbon, the brilliancy of which brought out quite effectually the shabbiness of everything else he wore, stood in one of the largest precincts, somewhat in the attitude of the sentinel at the gate of Pompeii, and with an expression of countenance which indicated his cheerful purpose to snatch victory or be buried in the ashes of defeat, and wait there a few centuries quite patiently for exhumation and life in immortal verse.

Judge Dragg rode from point to point in a handsome carriage, with Schney, Alderman Howley, and the prospect of a constant succession of drinks, and was appealed to at every turn to settle disputed questions bearing on the election laws. The solemnity with which he delivered his opinions made them as satisfactory as they were worthless.

Grit had but one answer for all the grumblers: "Vote for the devil if you find him on our ticket! Damn the man who don't vote or scratches his ticket!" This he repeated everywhere in a soft, low, but emphatic tone. When alone, and able to think for a moment, he congratulated himself on the fact that, thanks to Estimate's good work, the temperance men were voting the ticket

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straight in one ward to beat the liquor interest, while the money and great influence of the liquor dealers were at work to carry another ward for the party, with the assurance that victory meant security for them and their trade. Labor and Capital were shaking hands at the polls, each satisfied that the other was being completely sold out.

The unprincipled people of the community were voting to suit themselves, and generally for what they considered their interests, while the intelligent and worthy men of the town, of both parties, were voting, with hesitation and even disgust, the ticket prepared for them by their respective leaders.

Mr. Estimate was compelled to be on the move all day. He had built up, by years of careful work, a most astonishing reputation for wisdom, and had become a positively unique specimen of human nature, being regarded as eminently friendly to every sort of interest and to all sorts of people, and in some way managing to take an active part on both sides of every question without giving offense. He had a limit to his benevolence, however, which was well defined. Anything whatever which his party for the time approved, he most heartily endorsed, while anything outside of his party enclosure he denounced with measured solemnity, in a deep baritone, accompanied by gestures painful to see. At such a time his admirers felt creeping sensations about the spine, and sudden tendency of blood to the head, and would say how

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distressing it was to see such an able man rapidly and wilfully destroying himself in the service of an ungrateful people. Everybody consulted Mr. Estimate and felt obliged to go away greatly comforted, except Deacon Impetus, the son-in-law of Major Borax. He was evidently on bad terms with himself, and disposed to quarrel with politics. Meeting Estimate in a quiet place, he spoke out, saying: "So you are for that vile man, Schney! the man who, as Iodine, my wife, says, is responsible for the death of poor Filter, and who knew more about the murder in his place than he ever told. And still in the trade! I will scratch him, the old brute, if we lose the whole town."

Mr. Estimate felt the force of these remarks, and during their delivery gave the strongest evidence of feeling that he ever allowed himself—went through the motion of choking with a painful smile on his face. Having, as it were, cut the rope and let himself down, he replied: "You forget, my brother, that there was no *murder* after all; and that the doctor's certificate ascribed Filter's death to malaria, and not to liquor, as you were told. Mr. Schney keeps a restaurant, it is true, but, my dear sir, you must not allow your prejudices to cause you to overlook the fact that Mr. Schney is a large property-owner and tax-payer; that he is a public-spirited citizen, and as true as steel! Now, think a moment: My friend Schney—and I am proud of his friendship—is a self-made man; has been remarkably successful in business; has had a

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large experience, and is practically independent. Besides all that, he is very popular, and of course, represents a large class in the community."

Deacon Impetus shrivelled and discolored under this like sliced apples in the sun. The poor fellow had only one symptom of prominence, caused by his fondness for church affairs—his title as deacon. He was so poor, and had been poor so long, that he had abandoned all hope except the one hope that he might outlive the other deacons and become *senior* deacon. But he had strong opposition. Having no home on earth, he took a premature and, some wicked people thought, an exaggerated interest in his prospective home, and was trying to be as humble and as honest and as much of a Christian as he possibly could be without actually starving to death or suffering arrest as an imbecile vagrant.

Estimate's warm defense of Schney scarcely moved the deacon until he caught the words "success," "tax-payer," "experience" and "independence," and was made to feel how poor and shiftless and dependent he was himself as compared with the energetic and successful Schney. He flushed with shame as he recalled the fact that he had actually spoken of a prominent and rising citizen—Mr. Estimate's friend, too—as "the old brute." Then he began to wonder what Mr. Estimate, the wise and prudent person, would think of a poor man like himself, who was about to scratch a man remarkably successful and "as true as steel!"

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Then he almost determined that he would be a man at any hazard, and tell Estimate to his face what a fraud he was to be advocating the election of such a beast; but reconsidered the matter. Though he had nothing to lose, he wanted everything that goes to make life endurable, and amongst other things he needed friends. And so he concluded that, sweet as it was to denounce evil and evil men, he must forego the pleasure rather than offend good men and able politicians like Mr. Estimate.

The deacon felt that in casting a vote for Schney he would be giving the lie to all his past and to his Christian profession, and that if he scratched him he would be giving offense to men far better, that is to say more prosperous, more respected, and more influential than himself. After all, he concluded, "I am only a deacon!"

So the deacon, flanked on one side by a tender conscience, and on the other by a wholesome dread of poverty any deeper than that he endured, sneaked home without voting, and committed the unpardonable sin of politics. From that day the dignities of the diaconate lost their sweetness and he gradually pined away. It was not Schney's grandeur or the insolence of his pretensions, or even envy, that killed the deacon, but the inexplicable attachment of Brother Estimate and other worthy brethren in public life to his candidacy. In fact, the deacon was out of date, practically null and void—all his coupons clipped and collected long ago. Being nothing to the world but an irritating evidence of debt, his Master cancelled him.

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A man who has nothing to recommend him but gentleness, purity, and principle, and who is handicapped with poverty and a tender conscience, is not in a condition to go about asserting himself. His study should be modesty in all its branches. Politicians very properly maintain that such characters are a nuisance and an obstruction, and that the foolish prejudices which arise from religious conviction and a nice sense of propriety, and even the idea that a thing must be right to be admissible, ought to stand aside and let the party managers illustrate the possibilities of a well-conducted campaign as a great moral agent.

Some younger men, on familiar terms with Estimate, gave him a few of their opinions during the day in a frank and playful manner, which developed on his countenance a series of smiles painful to see. But Estimate had figured up the result, and was willing to wait a day for rest and reward. He knew that success would secure forgetfulness of all the crooked work of the day. Being thoroughly immersed in politics, he was as thoroughly convinced that it was his duty to make every little scruple of over-sensitive people give way, or, if necessary, to beat down the carping of innocent moralists. He was fast approaching a state of mind in which he would conclude that, after all, the surest and quickest route for the incoming of the millennium and the adjustment of the world was along the line of intelligent statesmanship.

As he walked slowly along a street recently opened and

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not yet built up, he was hailed by two brothers who had voted and were returning to their work—powerfully-built fellows, and by trade stone-masons. They were known to their friends and neighbors as "the Harmony brothers." Rubble, about thirty-five, and Ashler, twenty-nine years of age; honest, straightforward fellows, rather confident, owing to their great strength, and as independent a pair as ever toiled for food and raiment. Rubble seized Estimate by his coat with the gentle grip of a giant and said, without any introductory words: "So we are to have old Schney forced on us, are we, by you managers? Not so easily, though, Mr. Estimate, as you might suppose. Ashler here and I have put in two solid shots for the other side. We are with you until you try to ride us with such stuff as Schney, but right there we kick."

It was a lonesome place. Mr. Estimate's countenance was better adapted to solemnity and a sort of stolid dignity than to any light or variegated work, but the circumstances and surroundings stimulated him to the production of a series of pleased expressions quite creditable to one of such limited ability. He really appeared to be pleased with the hearty raillery of his stout friend, and actually laughed in such a way as to almost say: "I half agree with you, that I do."

Ashler, the younger and more fiery of the two, added with a quiet air, that he didn't care *a damn* for the party or the managers, or the candidates, either, and would vote as he pleased. He wanted, he said, all the chances

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he could get to down such villains as Schney, and, for that matter, the rascals who were helping him.

Mr. Estimate laughed a gentle approval of these remarks, and, thanking them for their deep interest in the election, departed, touching his hat and saying: "Gentlemen, I am glad to have met you—like to have suggestions—glad to meet my friends; ah, good day, good day; ha, ah, ha!"

At the next corner the pair encountered Mr. Grit, who engaged them in conversation, and soon, in a thoughtless moment, let slip the remark about the devil and scratching which had served him so well during the day. It proved to be injudicious, inasmuch as it aroused the indignation of the younger Harmony, who struck him a blow which was wonderful in that it was not instantly fatal. Grit sustained his remarks with all the strength at his command, but, of course, was soon a wreck. He managed to get to the meeting that night, but the false proportions of his head and the overdone shadows of his countenance, added to the languor of his movements, made him scarcely recognizable. Mr. Estimate was really distressed when he saw him.

Judge Dragg, Alderman Howley, Mr. Estimate, old man Febrile, and many other leading citizens, were there, laboring under intense excitement, a heavy supper, and innumerable drinks. It was soon evident from the returns that Schney had been elected by a handsome majority. Mr. Estimate seized the occasion to speak of Mr. Schney

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as the man who "had, by the liberal expenditure of his energy, time, and money, and by the application of his splendid abilities, done more than probably any other one man to save the city from ruin; that he deserved the thanks of the whole community, and especially of those who had been by necessity in the midst of the fray." Next morning the papers printed these remarks under the head: "Mr. Estimate Speaks For Us All!"

Later in the evening Mr. Schney himself arrived at headquarters, bringing the very latest intelligence from his ward, and the modesty and delicacy with which he referred to his own success gave indisputable evidence of his capacity and willingness to learn when he had a chance.

It seems to be a rule of fate or a law of nature to soften every triumph of man by the prompt introduction of a tragedy. Or, perhaps, fate is artistic and blends light and shade, or heightens joys by a dash of pathos, merely to indulge a pretty fancy or try new effects. Or, it may be, fate is a grim humorist, who distorts life into a caricature, and retires to laugh. Be that as it may, however, in the midst of general rejoicing and hilarity Judge Dragg became unaccountably silent. When playfully chided for his very unusual lack of interest, he made no response, but gazed fixedly and appealingly into the faces of those about him. Some one noticing the pallor of his face, and supposing he had fainted, offered him a flask. He did not make the slightest motion to receive it, or even turn

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his eyes wistfully towards it. At this every one became alarmed; those who looked at him from one side were struck with the awful solemnity of his face, while others, viewing him from the opposite side, thought they detected a smile. To many questions he answered nothing. Febrile, who had seen hundreds of sick and dying people, seized the left hand of the Judge, raised it to the level of his head and released it. It fell like a clod to his side.

"Paralysis," said Febrile.

In a few minutes a physician appeared, and ordered the instant removal of the patient to his home. As the doctor passed out he said to Grit, who had questioned him, "Oh, yes, deterioration of the tissues—blood-vessel given away—free effusion on the brain. Progressive, and necessarily fatal. No hope. Bye-bye!"

Febrile and Borax renewed their pledges to each other, and determined to say something impressive at the next meeting of the "Cool Spring Division." All things considered, they got home with remarkable ease and precision.

Mr. Schney walked home with his triumph badly hobbled by the untimely and ghastly conduct of his friend the Judge, and with occasional thoughts of the unreasonable death of Filter.

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CHAPTER VI.

A Public Slave.

FOR a few days Schney carried himself with a sort of suppressed pride. A close observer might have detected scintillations of vanity sweeping over and illuminating the general air of modesty which he was cultivating for public effect. Occasionally his pride got the ascendancy, and his gait became suggestive of too much strain between the crupper and the kimbal jack of his physical organization. At home, exhausted by the strain of carrying himself well, he relaxed into comfort. As he settled himself for the first time in the arm-chair provided for him in the Council chamber, the same struggle might be observed expressing itself in more subtle and interesting forms. The beautiful and almost pathetic weariness with which, after a day of private anxieties, he assumed the burden of public cares, could not fail to impress the intelligent observer; and after he was seated it was positively painful to see with what patient fortitude he listened to the unimportant details of the familiar routine.

There is nothing more distressing to a benevolent mind than to observe the steady accumulation of cares which comes to all men who are so unfortunate as to be torn from the composure and serenity of private life, and

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forced, by the exacting demands of public necessity, into positions of responsibility and labor—to be raised, as it were, to a dreary, solitary eminence, and there overlook the struggles and agonies of the surging masses of humanity.

Surely nothing but a just appreciation of the sacrifices he had already made, and a clear conception of the burdens which must in the future be laid upon him, could have converted the heretofore cheerful and hopeful Schney into the man he now seemed to be. It was evident that during the short time he had occupied his seat he had imbibed an amount of information concerning the complex interests of government sufficient to be a burden to him, and to cause him to be amazed that so many people managed to live and be so ignorant and so indifferent to the tremendous issues which he was now compelled constantly to consider.

At times he was startled by the thought that but for the self-sacrificing labors of himself and his associates, and their wise and patient care, a whole community—virtuous and innocent, but helpless and careless—might fall into irremediable ruin.

It is thus that Providence, seeing that the children of men are wilful and prone to neglect the great concerns of life, raises up, in due time, men of a sterner mould and of finer intuition than their fellows to be the leaders and guardians of helpless thousands. Schney often pondered the mystery of his rapid promotion, and sighed

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when he was compelled to admit to himself that it could be explained only on the presumption that he was sadly needed in the councils of the people. He saw that he was doomed to a life of servitude, and, with a courage commensurate with the solemnity of his convictions, resolved to accept the manifest leadings of Providence.

This resolve, firmly made, restored almost instantly the light-hearted and hopeful temper of the new friend of the people, and removed at once all danger of his retirement and its fearful consequences.

Estimate, now chairman of the local committee, and Grit, his adviser, took a rather different view of the causes of Schney's election, and had mapped out his future to their own satisfaction. They had failed to take into consideration, however, the fact that a man once raised to a position out of all proportion to his ability and character, rapidly convinces himself that he is fully equal to it and finally aspires to greater heights. They did not weigh the yet stranger fact that the man actually takes on some elevation, by reason of new opportunities, and finally approaches a development which, in appearance at least, fits him for honors which at first only exposed his incapacity; and this without any necessary improvement in that part of the man which the world calls his character, and by which he must finally be estimated. And so the man base by nature, forced by fortuitous events or elevated by careless voters into a high position, not only defiles the place of dignity, but from it steps to

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yet higher places, from which he serenely views the labors and unrewarded toil of his fellow-men. To rise above those that surround him, to be sought for and pleaded with and to dispense authority—these are the impulses which move the man emerging from obscurity.

Though Schney had been elected partly to satisfy the business interests, which he, to a certain extent, represented, he was yet more distinctly understood to represent the masses, including the poor and the ignorant; but in this capacity he was a failure, because he had never been in any true sense, a poor man, and had no feeling for the pains of poverty. When he was himself a common laborer, his sensibilities being undeveloped, he escaped by indifference the most bitter portion of the poor. It was his insensibility to the awful squalor at his home which enabled him, by saving in coin the comforts due his family, to collect his first means, and his heartless cruelty and selfishness which made it possible for him to keep his material interests in advance of his mental and moral improvement. When poor he did not, could not, feel it; and by the time his susceptibility to pain was developed he had left and had forgotten the land of dependence and fear and foreboding. The poor cannot be considered, with any justice, as a mass of level people. They are sub-divided, as other classes are, into sufferers and great sufferers. Some of them, possibly, never feel anything sharper than mere physical pain, while others know the poignancy of those inner pains which we try to sum-

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marize in the word anguish. In the great mass of the poor whom the new or modern statesman tries to represent, are many who have quietly fallen from affluence into an obscure comfort, which asks no help in material things, but craves a return of old associations, old friends, and old surroundings.

Others, descended, remotely it may be, from an ancestry of noble qualities, who for centuries perhaps enjoyed all the rare culture which wealth and rank combined can confer, feel a mysterious and irrepressible desire to escape from a life which does not satisfy, and find if possible that which their natures crave.

And others still, conscious of powers or of gifts which have not been discovered, or which the world refuses to recognize in such shabby attire, groan within themselves as they view the ready recognition of insolent sham clothed in the elegance of questionable prosperity.

If the great problem were simply how to supply the demand for food, raiment, and shelter, the world would soon solve it and poverty would vanish before the abundance which benevolence would supply; but the want which presses itself upon the notice of the world, and which demands relief, is the cry of the people for the recognition of the best qualities of humanity and for protection from the ever increasing insolence and tyranny which results from the elevation of vice, incapacity, and vanity to place and power. Thousands who are self-contained, who have not the remotest desire for the fictitious elevation of politi-

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cal life, and are therefore not open to the charge of envious disparagement, are compelled to submit to the rule of men who have long ceased to be representative, and are simply politicians by trade and the partners of other politicians. Their business is to sustain each other, and their capital consists of a great mass of voters swayed by constant appeals to hopes and fears previously implanted for that very use.

The official position of Schney compelled men infinitely superior in every sense to approach him deferentially, presenting their requests and pretending to hear his views with great interest and humble approbation. In proportion to their respectability and worth Schney's importance increased. He actually began to believe that he was necessary to these proud but helpless people, and that they were reluctantly consenting by their appeals to his wisdom and ability. While he consoled himself with this pleasant idea, vainly trying at the same time to grasp the meaning of the varied schemes presented to him, the simple-minded citizens laughed at his stupid pomposity and quietly arranged to capture his vote.

And so, gradually enlarged by a vanity which fed on delusions, Mr. Schney drifted away from many who were ignorant enough to honestly admire him and became the associate of others who flattered, used, and despised him. He rapidly lost all interest in the poor and struggling classes, who had pushed him out of obscurity with their votes, and when appealed to in their behalf, only advised

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them to emulate his example and rise. He was already convinced, as many another prosperous fellow before him has been, that he had raised himself by his own energy and industry, and that his old friends still left in the mire of poverty were shiftless and worthless, and therefore poor. He readily excused his attitude of superiority on the very reasonable ground that he was a superior man, and that he had demonstrated the fact. He was not alone in this conclusion, for thousands of really worthy men, made limp and hopeless by years of honest struggle against poverty, abandoned practically all faith in Providence and in virtue and made their obeisance in due time to the prosperous criminal. Good and brave men began to discover that it was useless to denounce a man so solid financially and so well supported by his political allies, and learned to their sorrow that persistence would result in nothing but their own serious hurt.

And yet it is said we are a kingless people. Perhaps a man might bend low before a sovereign crowned and enthroned, and yet not so profoundly bow as when before these monstrous accidents he pleads for right or seeks redress for wrong.

A hundred years of liberty, perfect as a dream when compared with any sovereign's reign, has given the cities of America to thieves and whiskey, commonwealths to aliens and strangers, and the President's chair to the highest bidder. And the great mystery which rolls unsolved over a continent is the fact that a free, prosperous,

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and enlightened people, despising the royal prerogative, and amused at the superstition of the divine right of kings, puts slaves of unknown ancestry in ruler's chairs and bows to the decrees of unlettered mobs.

At the end of one term this man, once so humble, was convinced that he possessed qualities which entitled him to recognition as a man of affairs, especially fitted for the work of guiding and governing the helpless respectability and aimless morality of the city. He sincerely pitied the numberless men about him who were deluding themselves with the idea that their characters alone entitled them to respect. He was utterly unable to understand why men who had never been in the Council, who had no property and no such business ability as he had, and no influence in ward politics, should go about acting as if they were really good citizens and even treating *him* with amused indifference. In fact, Mr. Schney secretly entertained the belief that he was far more patriotic and decidedly more American than the quiet natives of the city, who seemed, he thought, to have grown weary of citizenship and all its glories.

This thought inspired him to hope that a man as resolved as he was to rise in public life might greatly benefit himself and at the same time stir the dull indifference of the old inhabitants sufficiently to make them feel some interest in their country. Mr. Schney began to see that the most intelligent man in the community, if he had never been in the Council, really needed the watchcare of men

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like himself. It shocked him to think how many people there were who really did not know all the things he had learned. He felt that he was at last and forever separated from the great and level mass of unknown people.

In his new place of business Mr. Schney met, as he supposed, the very best people of the city, many of them his warm friends, and many others whose habits compelled them to meet him on terms of social equality or else, refusing, condemn themselves. Frequenters of bars cannot justly claim superiority to the proprietor. An honest man cannot despise another who ministers to his pleasure or to any habit of his, however base, and retain his respect for himself. A man's customers are his friends or his slaves.

Mr. Schney widened his circle of friends and extended his influence when he became himself a valuable customer. The wholesale men saw some fine traits in him. They found him a prompt and cheerful payer, an energetic, pushing man; anything which secured a place at his bar and his endorsement had an immediate and constant demand. But these things, important as they might seem, were as nothing compared with the fact that he was one man whose faith in the perfect innocence of the business never wavered. This beautiful confidence was apparent at all times, and made his presence in the office of a gloomy self-accusing dealer a benison. While he lingered, chatting and chuckling, evil forebodings could not press with their usual weight.

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It is worth something to have a friend near who will tell us that our fears are childish and our crimes only ugly dreams.

Danger, and even death, may be met with some composure if a brave companion grasps our hand and looks with fearless eyes upon that which made us tremble and choke with fright. A conscience void of offense may bring easement where any other messenger could not come. Schney was a good comrade of the wholesale dealers and, like a good soldier, occupied the exposed outpost while they revelled in the fortified respectability of the main line, sending, as the service required, all necessary supplies and words of cheer to the front.

With an ever-widening circle of friends, a growing influence, and increasing wealth, Schney was drifting into importance. People who thought they despised him, began to discover that it was scarcely reasonable to do so any longer. In fact, they found it exceedingly difficult to hold on to their honest convictions concerning the man. How was it possible, they reasoned, to reconcile their opinions and his wonderful success and popularity. Many who had innocently imagined themselves far more worthy of the respect and confidence of the community, found it necessary to retire into silence and to assume modest attitudes when the prosperous and rising Schney, the valuable and enterprising citizen, was mentioned. He was successful; failures would please be humble. The comments of the general public, and especially of the politi-

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cians, being always apologetic and frequently laudatory, it was considered in bad taste, and even an evidence of a sour, misanthropic, or fanatical disposition, to speak the truth about the man. He was entrenched behind his property and his strange hold upon the most unmanageable portion of the voting population. Thousands who would have been glad to see him returned to appropriate obscurity, began to fear that he was already master of the situation.

It is a strange fact, and a fact which may yet be made to throw some light upon practical politics, that the bar-rooms and liquor interests of nearly all, if not all, the large cities of this country exert more influence in determining nominations and elections than all the churches of all the denominations combined. It would be extremely interesting to inquire, also, why it should be true, if it is true, that a well-established reputation for piety is quite as damaging, if not really more fatal, to a man's political ambition than acknowledged and chronic immorality. It is astonishing what a load of crookedness and debauchery can be overlooked in an available candidate, and how extremely difficult it is to secure any extra consideration for unquestioned Christian virtues. It seems that the professional politician either *must* go down or *prefers* to go. The danger of any admixture of politics and religion is doubly guarded by the fact that religion would be almost as fatal to politics as politics would be to religion. The politician and the preacher are agreed. The shepherd

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and the goatherd combine their strength to build the wall which separates their flocks, and together patrol the neutral ground.

As the time drew near, preparations were made for another election. Estimate and his political associates, including, of course, Lawyer Grit, made a careful survey of the field, and concluded that they were now in a condition to do without the influence of the powerful representative of the Seventeenth ward.

"It is time to let old Schney down," said Grit.

"Yes," replied Estimate; "he would not help our cause this time. We are pretty well harmonized now, and he would be too pronounced—might create the idea that he represented something and stir up opposition."

"The State election is on us in the fall," added Grit, "and we must be careful to hide away all our 'specialties' and show staple goods only."

Mr. Estimate thought over this, or something else, for a moment or two, and finally said, with a far away, dreamy look, and in a tone about as musical as the raps of a cobbler's hammer, "I—ah—yes, I agree with you."

Mr. Schney was therefore quietly dropped from the Council. Not because unfit to be there, or because he desired it, or because his constituents desired it, but because the policy of the little band of devoted citizens called "the leaders" and the interests of the party demanded it. The same hands which had crowned him were about to push him under the knife and, when the work was done, hold up his ugly head that all might see.

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Mr. Schney seemed to submit, and expressed himself as if wounded rather than angry; a faithful and loyal man, sadly maltreated, but resolved to exhibit to the world a most unusual and admirable case of good behavior under galling and mysterious wrong. Of course, a man like him, conscious of his great usefulness, and made acquainted with his abilities by a brief opportunity to use them, could not fathom the conduct of his treacherous associates.

In thus retiring for a while from the distressing responsibilities and the unsought honors of public life, Mr. Schney was not without some very considerable consolation. Many people who had never heard of him until his appearance in the Council, now not only knew him, but knew him as a far more important individual than he really was. The mere fact that he had been in the Council in some way added to his importance, although it was well known that his election was a mere makeshift, and his presence there utterly useless. Others, who knew nothing of his character, thought of him as a man who could have pavements laid by the mile, innumerable gas-lamps set up, or parks opened and improved by a word or a nod. Others still imagined that he was a master of the art of finance, and that city bonds would never sell as well again as they did when he directed, with silent wisdom, their issue and redemption. Even the shrewdest and most intelligent people had imbibed the idea that, notwithstanding his utter lack of the most ordinary

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ability and the commonest attainments, he yet had that very desirable but intangible thing called influence. In fact, Schney's brief possession of power and his flagrant prosperity had blinded the intelligence of a whole community. All of this pleased Schney, who was still the same stupid fellow, and forced him to the conclusion that he was a truly wonderful specimen of a self-made man.

Mrs. Schney was the envy of all her poor neighbors. Her kindness and charity, her amiability, her almost apologetic manner—nothing could atone for her prosperity. She was envied and hated, poor thing, simply because she was able to do good and was constantly doing it. She made her home a model of comfort, and her daughter made it elegant. This made Schney happy and comfortable.

Mina, growing constantly more beautiful, and, in spite of her surroundings, more lovely in character and disposition, had enjoyed a great triumph before the people by a remarkable rendition of "The Angel's Serenade," in which she had played with such skill and effect that the people and the press long afterwards continued to sound her praise. Her father was flattered.

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The boys were travelling in the grandest regions of the West under the care of a tutor, and wrote home letters full of happiness.

Thus from the base conduct of the father come, apparently, honors for himself; ease and comfort for a faithful wife and mother; culture, safety, luxury, and triumph for his daughter; the delights of travel and the benefits of education for his boys. (But how fares Filter's widow and her babes?) The greatest consolation of all—the one which appealed most strongly to Schney himself—was a skilfully-drawn map hanging in the sitting-room of Mr. Schney's comfortable house, and entitled "Schney's addition." On it were broad streets and avenues, alleys, and building lots, laid off with the beautiful precision of the engineer, streets and avenues named, squares and lots numbered, and here and there suggestions of fountains, monuments and flower-beds.

While Mr. Schney was engaged in the public service he learned some things which he thought might be useful to a man who desired to do well, and, by accident possibly—some said by design—consulted Mr. Tinkle, a real estate agent, who was said to be a very clever and utterly unprincipled man, and who did an immense business for people who hoped that he would use his shrewdness for their benefit and bestow his rascality on some one else. The result of the conference was a purchase of lands at the growing end of the city, and—this beautiful map.

Schney bought the land and laid it off for the purpose

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of making by it all the money he possibly could, and it never occurred to him that he had been influenced by any other motive until the papers all declared that he had done a very liberal and public-spirited thing. Seeing this statement in print, he very properly concluded that it was true, and instantly believed it. Almost anybody will believe a thoroughly agreeable lie. He then gradually convinced himself that he was a benefactor who deserved to be remembered, and finally decided to embalm his name in the principal street of his plan—"Schney avenue." At the suggestion of Mr. Tinkle, who had kindly consented to continue to be his agent, he added, with some justification, "Pauline avenue" and "Wilhelmina fountain." Mr. Tinkle planted trees; the best engineers graded the streets; fashionable people bought lots. It was a gold mine.

How is a poor fellow who *feels* that he is poor, and that he must continue to be poor, to preserve his self-respect and his faith in the dignity of labor and the worth of character, when he sees the deference bestowed upon the Schneys and hears constantly their praises sung, and compares it all with the desolate neglect and indifference which it is his lot to endure? Is he not more than human if his heart is not made bitter when called upon to be cheerful, contented and humble and honest, while the Schneys in the community push their way to wealth, influence, and a very satisfactory sort of respectability? The awful question which faces the people is simply

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whether honesty will continue to be honest and suffer, or turn rascal and prosper.

It is already quietly admitted that a thoroughly honest man, modelled on the old plan, may be very ornamental—a desirable sort of bric-a-brac—but can hardly be a business man, and certainly not a reliable man for political emergencies. Such people have a very hopeless and simple air to "live" men. Sometimes a rascal fails; his associates laugh at him pleasantly, and, believing in his shrewdness, soon set him on his feet again with substantial aid. Then they give him good cheer. Good, cool contempt is reserved for the fellow who persists in uprightness at a terrible loss.

The most pitiable object after all is the man who, no matter how, manages to get poor and stay so. Chronic poverty has pity occasionally and contempt constantly. Judged by the treatment it receives from humanity in general it is a most inexcusable crime. There may be some hope for a man who is low, mean, shrewd, and prospering; but let it once be known that a man is hopelessly poor, and his fate is sealed. What can be done for such a man? He is beyond help!

Schney had thought much about money, and had learned all these things. He knew that his position in the community was viewed from different standpoints, and that he was variously estimated at everything from a nuisance to an ornament. He was engaged in an old business, called the pursuit of happiness, and thought he was on the right trail, but he was really fighting his way to a place in life which would put an end to rest.

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CHAPTER VII.

The Death of Grit.

THE new Council, with Schney left out, was hardly organized before Mr. Grit began to develop that peculiar, restless energy which in him always foreshadowed the approach of an election. His soft felt hat got turned up behind and turned down before; his hands got deeper in his pockets, and his step quick and short. People began to stop him in the street and ask questions, which he answered with a bark and almost with a bite. He allowed his shoes to run down at the heel and his clothes to get shabby. Occasionally he chewed tobacco, to which he was not accustomed, with the expression of a dog eating grass. Every few days he consulted Mr. Estimate, watching him anxiously when he spoke. There was nothing ornamental about Grit, but he was practical utility compressed. People who knew him well said that in an emergency he was simply cooler and braver than usual. When the active spirits met for consultation Grit led the meeting.

Estimate was preparing in his own way for the conflict. He was rarely seen anywhere, though he was really everywhere, and those who met him were amazed at what they supposed to be his utter indifference to the approaching storm. As he glided around with a sort of invalid air, abstracted or sleepy, he would be the last man a

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stranger would suspect of any schemes. He, nevertheless, had a few schemes, and the patience to wait for the proper time to launch them. He had already consulted privately with the leading men of every faction of both parties, and, without dispensing a single item of information, had learned more probably than any other one man knew. His habit of learning without dispensing, and asking without answering, was so fixed that it was a torture for him to meet Grit and be compelled to part with one or two facts. For work on the suburbs Mr. Estimate used an old vehicle, which, by some mysterious means, was deprived of the rattling characteristics of old vehicles generally, and which could turn a corner, on cobble stones, in the shades of evening, as smoothly and as noiselessly as a flat-bottomed boat glides around the curves of a canal, the ample flapping wings of the top concealing meanwhile the solitary driver. Late in the night this strange machine, drawn by a horse whose feet seemed to be muffled with velvet, would dart around the corners and frighten the police and the belated citizens homeward bound.

That the approaching fight would be close and hard, everybody admitted. Estimate was for soothing every faction of his party and winning all of the enemy possible. Grit wanted to raise the party colors, demand a rally of the faithful, and show defiance to the enemy. Grit animated the pronounced and uncompromising, while Estimate tenderly nursed the fearful and timid of his own

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party and encouraged desertions from the other side, saying, with an indescribable air of generosity, that, after all, the difference was slight, and that he could almost wish he was on both sides.

It soon became apparent that the leaders were not agreed on a plan of campaign. Indeed, it was pretty generally known that they were hopeless of success and on the verge of despair. Their only hope seemed to be to fool themselves or the enemy, but just how they could not tell. After the expenditure of a perfectly frightful quantity of wisdom, a proceeding which was, to say the least, extravagance, it was decided "to count the enemy and count our friends; if the majority on our side was dangerously small, arrange to increase it, and if the enemy appeared to have a majority, arrange to cancel it." This idea was so entirely novel that everybody departed full of enthusiasm and hope, and all went willingly to work. Two brass bands, in the habit of making big fees at election times, offered their services free, and they were declined with thanks.

A full month before election day Mr. Estimate knew, practically, what the result would be, provided nothing unusual happened. But something unusual did happen. Mr. Schney announced himself a candidate for the Legislature, without taking the trouble to say which party he desired to represent. He knew that neither party could afford to have him in the field as an independent, and that a simple announcement would enable him to determine

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at his leisure which party should have the honor of electing him. He preferred to be with the better elements of the city, and was secretly convinced that he could compel Estimate and his friends to accept him, but was prepared, if it became necessary, to go over to the enemy. Knowing that success was certain if he sided with the lower elements and carried with him the liquor influence, and that on the other hand, the endorsement of Estimate's committee would give him the support of the dominant party and elect him, he serenely waited to be approached. The man who had been used as a bait had learned to cast a line for himself, had determined to do it, and had no favors to ask.

The liquor dealers all desired, like Schney, to vote with the decent people and the dominant party, but were always suspicious and uneasy, and ready at a moment's notice to desert to the enemy if there were any signs of danger to their interests in the party movements. They, like other business men, felt that, after all, their allegiance was due first to business; nothing so sacred as that! The business man, whether he has time to utter it or not, thinks everybody else, and especially politicians, practically useless. He tolerates a few other men, in the kindness of his heart, such as preachers, lawyers, chemists, engineers, physicians, and so on, but after all, feels, in a sort of fatherly way, that it is well for all these that they have him to lean upon. He is also inclined to the opinion that everything will work around all right if business

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prospers, and he rather thinks that the best way to keep politics, religion, and morals on their feet is to build up trade; consequently he votes, with a sort of supermoral air, for the best interests of business.

In announcing himself, Schney had at one stroke, proved himself unworthy of confidence, and demanded for himself the support of the people, fixing a penalty to their refusal—defeat. There was nothing to be done but to make terms with him, and do it promptly. Accordingly that mysterious and wonderful body called "the committee" got hurriedly together, and after another perfectly reckless expenditure of the very rarest kind of wisdom, authorized Mr. Estimate to treat with Schney and guarantee him the party nomination.

Nobody has yet discovered why it is that ten or twelve men, whose individual opinions and characters have no weight whatever with anybody, can get together in a political committee and become the centre of wisdom and influence, and sway the destiny of a community. But so it is; at least people have gotten in the habit of submitting to their dictation as completely as if it was so. It is simply amazing, when one stops to think of it, what insignificant fellows do their own good pleasure with the helpless voters.

Mr. Estimate dropped in the next morning, and was cordially received by Mr. Schney, who invited him to a cozy place, well back from the street, and quite private. Some very fine beer was handed to Mr. Estimate, who

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could drink it with the most innocent and orthodox air possible. To see Mr. Estimate drink beer was to confess that nothing could be more innocent. He handled his glass in a manner so gentle and caressing and so deferential that Schney himself was convinced of his sincere attachment to its contents, and determined to send him a dozen or two bottles that very day. And yet beer was one good thing in the world that Estimate could not learn to like.

In a few minutes everything had been arranged, and Mr. Estimate was walking wearily along, exasperating everybody by appearing hopelessly indifferent and stupid. When approached by anxious inquirers, he displayed two lustreless eyes, and opened his mouth with a dry explosion suggestive of fever and thirst. Instead of answering, he questioned all.

Everything, it is said, has its uses. Men like Mr. Estimate are therefore useful, and deserve to be protected in the enjoyment of their peculiar gifts. People who are of simpler construction sometimes envy them and sometimes fear them, and, if they can muster up manhood enough, despise them. They are apt to be influential and mean, and when they add ambition to their other qualities, they either curse or bless, to its circumference, the circle of their influence. They make good politicians.

It was now a fixed fact that thousands of men had to vote for Schney, and that he was going to the Legislature to represent the greatest city in the State. Where uni-

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versal suffrage prevails it is impossible to nominate and elect men to representative positions on the ground of suitability, or capacity, or worth of any sort. Probably the greatest difficulty is experienced in the nomination, which is generally controlled by professional politicians, rather than in the election, which is simply a ratification by the people of the candidate of the politicians. The determination of each party to win, subordinates everything else. It is useless to object. When a poor helpless private citizen cries out and declares his unwillingness to choose between two rascals, he is instantly held up to scorn as a man who thinks himself better than his party. Possibly he may be! Nobody has as yet declared in favor of the idea that parties are governed by any moral sense.

When Schney became the nominee everything was considered settled, and everybody was expected to acquiesce. The men who decided that he was the man had but one argument to support their action—he would be elected, of course! But such victories bring inevitable defeat.

Schney's opponent was a man greatly superior to him in every sense, being a man of education, of fine natural ability, and of unimpeachable moral character; but he was in the wrong party, he was fearless, and he was aggressive. His election, desirable as it might be for some reasons, would endanger the civilization of the community. On the other hand, it appeared that the election of Schney would insure good government. The dangerous party had strengthened its cause with a good can-

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didate, and the party which ought to triumph was loaded with Schney.

Mr. Estimate knew that his formidable opponent would poll the full vote of the opposition, and that many of the temperance men would scratch Schney. Altogether the outlook was so discouraging that he resolved to be satisfied with a majority of one for his candidate.

Grit was duly notified that every possible vote for Schney had to be polled, and that no time, money, or labor was to be spared to reduce the voting strength of the enemy. Victory was to be secured if toil and strategy could produce it. He was ordered to go to every stronghold of the enemy and to man every precinct with brave and determined challengers. He cheerfully undertook the heavy task, distributed his men skilfully, and finally took personal charge of the most dangerous precinct in the city.

Grit had worked unceasingly through the night preceding election day, and when the sun rose, was pale and haggard and nervous. Friends supplied him an abundant breakfast, spoke cheering words, and wished him success.

When the polls were opened a great throng of ignorance, black and white, was seen waiting in orderly silence to deposit its vote. It was a solid column of the enemy. Every voter was carefully questioned and the ballots slowly deposited, Grit protesting, arguing, and threatening. But still the little ballots slipped in, one by one, and the number waiting to vote was increased rather than diminished.

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These people had no use for Schney, and were not respectable enough to be dragooned into voting for him. Their place in the world was so obscure that they were at liberty to suit themselves, and thought they were doing it. They thought so because they had resisted all appeals made to them by the dominant party; but they overlooked the fact that, as a result, they had only the poor privilege of voting for the other side.

The Constitution and laws under which we live—which we fondly suppose to be the things which govern us—are mutable things, which take on and execute with fearful and irresistible force the wishes of one majority to-day and of another to-morrow. Two great parties govern the country, and are in turn themselves governed by a few professional politicians. The citizen who is not a politician votes, it is true; but the issues are made for him, and his vote is demanded for the issue by his party, whatever it may be, as confidently as the government demands taxes. The citizen grows less and less. The politician wields a sort of elephantiasis of power—diseased power—but yet power. "Private citizen" has got to mean a man who must vote and keep his mouth shut—must not presumptuously meddle with the country. Schney is at the helm, and the ship of state will be brought safely to harbor! The people will, therefore, please go below and allow the hatches to be battened down.

As the day wore away discontent manifested itself here and there by grum and sour looks and low mutterings in

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the crowds about the polls. It was evident that a number of votes would be shut out. Active politicians glided in, injected a little bitterness, and glided out again.

As the hour of closing drew nearer the crowd pressed closer and closer upon the polling-place, some of the bolder sovereigns loudly expressing their dissatisfaction at the deliberate manner of the challengers. Grit, nearly exhausted, but firm and patient, stubbornly challenged every doubtful vote, and sighed when compelled to yield. Suddenly a crier announced that the hour had arrived to close the polls—that the polls *were closed!* A growl ascended from the crowd as the door was closed. Immediately a squad of police swept around the corner, and with soft, low words, and gentle but suggestive pressure, began to move the disappointed voters away from the precinct. In a few moments the street was cleared, and silence reigned.

As Grit entered the precinct to superintend the count and returns, he shook hands with a friend, and received from him something with a silvery glimmer (which his friend told him was "a hammerless, calibre 38"), and dropped it in the pocket of his spring overcoat. It was understood that the work would consume the night, and that it was dangerous. Several of Grit's friends, besides policemen, lingered near, ready to aid him in any emergency.

For hours the slow and tiresome work went on inside. Those on the outside could hear the monotonous count—

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one, two, three, four, tally! or the candidates' names repeated over and over again, or Grit energetically protesting. At last, when the hour was past midnight, loud and angry words were heard—a mean fellow, a leader of the opposition, gave Grit the lie flatly. Instantly a gigantic policeman pressed the door with his shoulder until it flew open and hung trembling by one hinge. He saw Grit plant his fist, backed by every pound of his weight, square in the face of the man who had assaulted him, and then fall lifeless to the floor. A negro bar-keeper and politician, degraded even in the estimation of his own race, a known thief and libertine, had resented the blow received by his friend by firing a ball into the brain of the young lawyer. As soon as it was known that Grit's wound was fatal, silence settled upon all in the room. The murderer, speechless and trembling, walked away between two policemen.

Grit lay stretched upon the floor, his bleeding head supported upon the folded coat of a friend who loved him like a brother, and who hung over him with mixed agony and wonder. His pain and grief, though great, did not prevent a deep feeling of regret that he had not been quick enough to get in and at least stand by his brave friend at the critical moment. When he looked upon him, and realized for a moment that he was actually dead, he felt ashamed to be alive, and wondered how he would be able to endure himself.

It was a simple thing after all—a vote and a pistol in

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the hands of a brute. Intelligence, virtue, patriotism and courage cancelled by ignorance and a second-hand antiquated pistol! And yet if Grit had promptly pulled out his "hammerless 38," silver-plated and new, and had saved his own valuable life by killing a worthless scoundrel, he would have been denounced, in all probability, by thousands who sincerely mourned over his death and admired his heroic behavior.

It is still the fate and the duty of some people to die. Generally speaking, good men—the best men—are called upon to submit to the fate or to perform the duty. The commonplace man all over the country has long since abandoned the idea that anything like a mere theory or even a principle should interfere seriously with a man's happiness or damage him materially, or for a moment endanger his life. He pities or despises the fanaticism and impractical folly of a man who gives his life for anything, and he is for yielding or compromising or surrendering, rather than have his peace and prosperity disturbed, or his precious person put in jeopardy. Therefore, an occasional death which illustrates the fact that there are fears and hopes more potent than the love of life itself is a useful stimulus to principle and a valuable suggestion to the community in which it occurs.

Every people needs a man dead who died for his fellow-citizens and in the manly pursuit of their rights as they interpret them. A grave which contains a sacrifice is an inspiration to all who view it, and, when properly adorned,

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an invaluable object-lesson worthy of the care of generation after generation.

When people get to be thoroughly unwilling to die for their principles, and violently opposed to the death of others on their account, they are on the way to hopeless corruption. Nothing more promptly clarifies the moral atmosphere than the tragic death of a great and good man, personifying a great and good cause. Heaven once used a scene like this to convince the world of sin. God spurns and men despise a cause which cannot furnish great spirits to be consumed by the conflict which it wages.

In the morning the papers announced a victory shorn of much of its joy by the untimely death of Grit.

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CHAPTER VIII.

The Modern Fool.

PEOPLE like to account for a man's good fortune, and everywhere they inquire into its cause and wonder at its manifestations. We are told in one proverb, and no doubt truly, that fortune favors the brave, and in another, with equal confidence, the philosopher exclaims, "A fool for luck."

In romances good fortune follows the author's favorite, and the reader is made happy by the cunning fiction. In picturing the career of the Honorable Conrad Schney, however, no such deception is necessary. His fortune is as real as himself. That he was fortunate in business and in politics was so plainly to be seen that men ceased to wonder, and concluded that there must be in the man some mysterious and as yet undiscovered qualities that made him naturally and almost necessarily a leader of men. It was now pretty generally understood—at least the Daily Spatterer said so—that at certain places and times—when it became necessary for him to speak, he had astonished his hearers by the fluency, power, and grace with which he had delivered himself.

The impression was growing that Schney was another instance of the accidental discovery and fortunate development of great mental powers, destined to wield a power-

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ful influence in the community, and possibly throughout the Commonwealth. It was already wise to speak of him with great respect, and foolish and damaging to do what was most natural, and laugh at him. It is useless, however, to laugh at a man retired from business, residing in a palace, having a handsome fortune well in hand and an established reputation for rare sagacity and great experience in public affairs. Mr. Schney had already quietly retired from business, his successor was in possession and doing well, and the public had, with its usual accommodating spirit, forgotten that he was ever anything but a polished gentleman and born statesman. A man who dared to hint that the Honorable Conrad Schney was not thoroughly admirable, simply strained the public faith in his own veracity.

A man so wealthy, so active, and so prominent as Mr. Schney must have detractors, and so Mr. Schney secured a few at small cost—mean fellows, sour, misanthropic, and envious, such as can be found in every community, ready to pull down honorable aspirants by any foul slander heavy enough. These assassins of virtue strike at every rising man, impugn the motives of every patriot, and gradually accumulate such a store of venom, that men avoid them until they need poison for an enemy. Such people, enraged by the wealth and rapid promotion of Mr. Schney, exhausted every art and all their deviltry in their efforts to damage him in the estimation of the public, but only embittered their own lives and exposed the

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inherent meanness of their characters. Schney, serenely insensible to it all, grew daily in favor with men.

The Governor, seeing the popular demand for some recognition of the distinguished services of Mr. Schney, and wiling to do what he could to silence the villainous attacks of his enemies, and for other reasons, no doubt, appointed him on his personal staff, with the rank of colonel of cavalry. Of course, the soreheads and the insignificant people who make up the rank and file began to insinuate that the Governor was acting from selfish motives and trying to secure the influence of Schney and his wealth in aid of some future schemes; but those who were best informed and most influential soon crushed this slander.

It leaked out, from what or from where was never known, that Schney was no novice in military matters, had even won distinction in foreign fields years ago, and was no small acquisition to the staff. Unprejudiced people readily accepted this view of the matter, and began to have a suspicion that the Colonel had been hiding a brilliant military record under a thick, heavy, long cloak of curiosity-proof modesty. Indeed, the Colonel's extreme reticence about all his past, and especially the success with which he avoided any vain allusions to his military exploits, excited the admiration of the large and brilliant circle in which he moved, and convinced all of the best people that he was a man of rare strength, with possibly an interesting history behind him. One ride through

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crowded streets, clad in glittering uniform, sitting in an open carriage by the side of the Governor, his sword reclining against his side, his countenance properly arranged to create an impression—and he was Colonel indeed.

It might seem a simple thing to ride in a carriage with a proper expression and maintain it unbroken for an hour or two, and possibly to a Governor accustomed to the arduous duty of always looking distinguished, it is an every-day, easy affair; but Colonel Schney, not being accustomed to the work, found that it was no small matter to look like a colonel, without a moment's escape from the gaze of the multitude for nearly two hours, and was glad when the parade was over and he could once more bend a little and rest his countenance and his spine. It required several days' time, however, to thoroughly eradicate the fierce and determined expression engendered by the stern necessities of the occasion. It may seem inexplicable that a ride in a carriage under military circumstances should affect a man's walk, but, strange and unaccountable as it may be, from that day the Colonel had a decidedly soldierly bearing and responded promptly, with a brisk salute, to all who addressed him by his military title. There were some old, rather shabby American colonels who watched Schney with inexpressible amusement. They did not find it possible to say anything, or necessary, but simply pointed at the Colonel, punched each other in the ribs, and then chuckled. All this was done privately,

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of course, because these old soldiers had learned that, while titles of a military sort are very desirable and very useful when presented to some gentlemen absolutely innocent of any right to them, and serve admirably to confer a little dignity or help on an aspiration, the genuine rank gained by arduous duty and heroic conduct should be careful, being somewhat antiquated, not to flaunt itself in the face of a peaceful era or presume to compare its honest but ancient record with the brilliant career of a modern patriot. These old fellows had heard it said that it was unreasonable to expect able men like Colonel Schney to wait for honors until all the real soldiers were dead, and that the eulogy "good soldier" had been sufficiently rewarded. And so it has come to pass that it is decidedly presumptuous to expect any consideration on account of a military title unless it can be clearly shown that the title was not earned honestly in war, but conferred especially for immediate business purposes. When thus conferred it is eminently proper to make the most of it, and nobody expects any modest behavior from the fortunate recipient. It is, of course, quite a different thing when a man goes about allowing people to call him "colonel" when the title calls public attention to what he has really done and suffered. Such conduct is inexcusable.

The "House" had been organized only a few days when Mr. Tinkle dropped in to see Colonel Schney on a little matter of business, and was received as cordially as even a confidential friend can hope to be received by a

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man accustomed to the consideration of the great and the admiration of thousands of plain, humble people. A private room, wine, cigars. The wine was for Mr. Tinkle only, for Schney was no more tempted by liquor to drink, knowing as he did its power over men, than an undertaker would be to die and be buried by the sight of a handsomely-trimmed and expensive burial casket.

"I congratulate you upon your triumphant election, my friend," said Tinkle, "and I am glad to be the bearer of still more good news. How would you like to become the owner of the Stemmery mansion?"

"The Stemmery mansion? To own it, did you say?"

"Yes, my dear sir, and live there!"

"Why, my good friend, you are quite wild, and think I am a millionaire already, to talk about such a thing."

"Never was more in earnest, Colonel. Will you buy the place?"

"But I am not able; my place at Braxton's is a good home yet."

"Suppose I offered you the Stemmery mansion in exchange for the Braxton place?"

"Then I would say you were losing your senses—gone c-r-r-razy."

"Say the word then," said Tinkle, "and the exchange is made! I will arrange everything; write your deed, take your signature and the madame's, and in exchange give you a perfect title to the new place."

"Why, of course; if such a thing is possible, why, of

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course. If I can have the Stemmery house I will take it, ha! ha! of course!"

"To-morrow, then," said Tinkle, scarcely able to hide his pleasure, and hurrying away; "to-morrow the papers will be signed and recorded."

Mr. Schney knew that Mr. Tinkle was credited with having performed some miracles in real estate, and that his fame as a brilliant operator saved him from any lack of patronage on account of the almost universal suspicion that he was a rascal, and would not have been much surprised if Tinkle had sold some of his lots for him at five times their value; but this proposition overpowered what the Daily Spatterer called his "great mental powers," and rushed with resistless fury upon his "reserve force," scattering it to the winds. Nothing in legislative experience had ever so taxed his splendid powers. It was in vain that he sought some reasonable explanation.

Schney's home was a plain, substantial, roomy old house, comfortable enough, but not well situated. The surroundings could not be agreeable to a man of Mr. Schney's position and tastes. The Stemmery mansion had been recently completed, at a great expense, in the most fashionable and delightful part of the city. Its owner, a comparatively young man, who had inherited a handsome fortune, had tried to build the quietest and at the same time the most elegant house in the city, and had, it was generally admitted, succeeded in his effort. The exterior was an almost perfect success, and the interior

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simply palatial. But the owner, seized by an almost unaccountable prejudice, was anxious to try a new architect and new effects in stone. He desired to sell.

When Tinkle approached him with an offer, Stemmery, supposing it to be only a move in some sharp game, named his price, signed an agreement to sell, and soon obliterated the transaction with a game of billiards. The next day, to his great surprise, he was asked to sign the deed. A certified check for the whole of the purchase-money accompanied the request. The same day Schney's home, the old Braxton homestead, passed by deed to the P. and Q. Terminal Company, and the mystery was solved. The counsel of the company had ascertained that there were some serious difficulties in the way of condemnation. It happened to occupy a spot absolutely essential to the success of the great tunnelling scheme of the P. and Q. Terminal Company, and hundreds of thousands, if not a million dollars, depended upon its possession. The management determined to take no risks. Mr. Tinkle became, almost as a matter of course, the efficient agent of the company, completed the task assigned him, and received his reward.

At the end of six months the Spatterer had announced the removal of "The Honorable Conrad Schney" to his new residence in the "court" end of the city, and fifty Swedes were toiling over the ruins of the Braxton house, now laid low by a dynamite cartridge. The tunnel was well under the hill. Mr. Tinkle had in the meantime made

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another very satisfactory arrangement. The trustees of the fund for the erection of the great "astronomical tower" having accepted a site in the midst of "Schney's addition," the grandest structure of its kind in the world was slowly rising from the centre of a miniature park. It was almost a certainty that the tract would soon be the scene of costly improvements and the value of it a million. Choice lots were eagerly sought, and, of course, very reluctantly sold. The Legislature, always keenly alive to the interests of the great commercial centres of the State, was seriously considering a bill to extend the corporate limits around this valuable tract.

Colonel Schney, in addition to his arduous duties as representative of the metropolitan city, undertook service on important boards, to which he was from time to time appointed by the Governor, giving to them all the benefit of his great skill and experience in business affairs and stimulating his associates by the display of almost superhuman energy. At least, so said the Spatterer, and for all practical purposes so it was.

The end of a long and tedious session left the Colonel free to seek the repose to which his eminent services entitled him and his natural inclination invited him. He realized with pitiful force the awful weight of the responsibilities of a man viewed by a great community as the natural guardian of their rights and of their liberty, and secretly cherished the hope that the people would find some one else to assume the burden he had laid down.

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His great trouble, at this time, was a gnawing fear that possibly no one could be found!

During his retirement Colonel Schney rapidly acquired some of the marks peculiar to men who have had their great qualities acknowledged by the world. Though he had a reputation for overwhelming power in oratory, he was a man of few words in the private circle, often expressing his approval or dissent by a single exclamation of the kind most aptly called a grunt. This single mode of expression was peculiarly effective at the meetings of a large and fashionable church, of which he was a prominent and valued member, and rarely failed to produce almost phenomenal results. Other men there argued, illustrated, and pressed with fervor their views, only to be annihilated by the portentous grunt of the man of affairs and of means. Whenever a presumptuous or vain fellow was laid low by the magic mumbling of the Colonel the plainer brethren gazed long and wistfully at his heavy countenance, and then, with a sigh indicative of mixed wonder and humility, turned and looked at each other, nodding their heads, with wide-open eyes and dropped jaw, saying as plainly as pantomime could: "Ah! brethren, there wisdom spoke!" Then the pastor would say he "was sure the brethren felt under heavy obligations to Brother Schney for his well-timed and forcible words," and that "he hoped our dear brother would be spared many years to guide us by his wisdom and teach us by his beautiful example."

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The great veneration of the people for the Colonel was manifested in many ways, but probably nowhere else could it be so plainly seen as when he sat as director of the Hide and Bones Bank and passed upon great piles of commercial paper. In order to turn down a very large loan it was sometimes necessary for him to grunt, once, vigorously; but he usually settled the fate of the smaller offerings by spitting in an exasperated manner. This style of comment was instantly recognized by the board to mean "rejected," and always caused a general smile, designed to express, as nearly as possible, full assent to the decision and keen appreciation of the Colonel's humorous manner.

The Colonel had now reached that degree of distinction which is marked by a desire for a better style of atmosphere than cities can generally supply. Atmosphere which had answered his purpose pretty well for many years, and which was still used with entire satisfaction by numbers of people who could not afford a better article, he found at times very unsatisfactory. Sometimes, unable longer to restrain himself, he complained of it in bitter terms. It was really distressing. At last, convinced that the atmosphere was hopelessly bad, the Colonel hurried away to the sea-shore, determined to have, at any cost, the very best air the market afforded.

Colonel Schney actually believed that he had determined to escape from public life and seek that quiet enjoyment of his ample means which is the dream of all

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ARMOUR

men who spend their lives in the pursuit of wealth. He felt that his past activity had made him too well known for his escape to be easy, and that nothing but good management and ingenuity and persistence in retirement could preserve him from fresh entanglement in public matters. The man had learned more than his most ardent admirers supposed he had, and actually began to realize that political honors could not add much comfort or pleasure to his life, and might be a positive discomfort. He was almost resolved to do the smartest thing of his life: Retire into obscurity and comfort.

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CHAPTER IX.

Mina's Refuge.

IN HIS home, elegant in all its parts, Colonel Schney enjoyed the constant affection and humble devotion of a wife so greatly his superior that many people, not yet blinded by his wonderful career, wondered how two such people had ever blended into man and wife and then lived so peacefully and happily together. The wife had grown in grace and gentleness even more rapidly than the husband had grown rich, and amid all the splendor of the home there was nothing more attractive than the quiet Pauline. Abundant means had put into visible effect her innate taste, and she was in manner and attire the mistress of her home.

Mina filled the house with music and songs so rare as to be almost a mystery. Mixing the artlessness of a child with the skill of a woman, she petted and fondled and controlled her mother and constantly mystified her father. She had never approved of her father's public career, but was yet proud of his success, and even admired him, in the sense that the public did, without yielding to him any greater credit than he deserved. She had not forgotten her childhood or her father's past, and her honest heart compelled her to review, with a mind now capable of close analysis, all of the old life. She recalled

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with inexpressible pain the pathetic life of her gentle mother and the awful surroundings amidst which her own life began, and even proved to herself that much of it all resulted from her father's deliberate choice. And so she loved her father, and at the same time studied him as a mysterious relative close to her by the ties of nature, yet infinitely removed.

Thus most cruelly does a man's crime punish him, using as instruments of torture those for whom he sacrificed his virtue—and those whom he strove to bless to illustrate his failure.

Mina could not understand her father, because in her narrow and brief experience of life, she had not discovered how one serious fault, or one conscious surrender of principle, or even one serious indiscretion, warps and disfigures a man. She could not know that her father, slowly perceiving what manner of man he was, began to suspect his own worthiness and exaggerate the worthiness of others. She did not know that some men—even some considered dull—recognize and evade men or women of superior virtue, and are humbled in the presence of a strong character, which they admire and would gladly imitate if they could. She had yet to learn that men are repulsive and ridiculous, not because of many faults, but because some one sin or misfortune or weakness twists and distorts everything in their lives.

She did not know that under a calm exterior her father carried a heavy load of care, nor was it possible for her

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to know how depraved his ambition and his success had made him.

Every soul confesses to itself at least, and does ample penance in secret. Men are vainer on the surface than anywhere else, and, though generally anxious to have the good opinion and the good will of others, do not, so commonly as some suppose, think too highly of themselves. It is only the great fools who are thoroughly deceived and permanently conceited. An ordinary man cannot be an extraordinary fool.

The truth is, that many a brave man accepts the estimate of himself which his honest mind makes, and, manfully refusing to be deceived by others, lives contentedly in the condition and in the pursuit for which he is fitted. When the strong motives to self-assertion and the great rewards it brings are considered, the wonder is that so many are contented to be themselves.

The men most in danger are those who occupy positions, comparatively humble they may be, which confer upon them a sort of right to criticise, and at the same time protect them from the same ordeal. Pointing out constantly the faults or failure of many others, who are forbidden to reply, gradually exalts a man in his own estimation, if in no other way, by contrasting the small number of his own faults with the number and variety of faults in the multitude he overlooks.

Schney, by abject surrender to the idea, first, that he must make money and then that he must have honors,

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was led into a life full of perils for himself and for his family. Those perils which surrounded him in the old life, though numerous, were palpable and more readily avoided by a simple-minded man. The higher life swarmed with insidious evils which none but the strongest could resist.

Schney knew that his darling daughter, the pride of his house, was inexorably honest, and that her love for him was a constant triumph of natural affection. He trembled at the thought of her utter estrangement, and was never so happy or so humble as when she laid her head on his bosom and thanked him for some thoughtful kindness.

One evening Mina sung, with a depth of feeling almost painful to herself, a song of ravishing beauty, which filled her mother's heart with vague distress and brought unwilling tears to her eyes. The father, generally indifferent or simply vain, listened with unusual interest, and when the song was ended exclaimed: "It is beautiful! I will give you anything!" Then, turning to his wife, he said: "Pauline, I have been a great fool!"

As the three sat looking at each other with tearful eyes Mr. Curbing was announced. Mrs. Schney and Mina welcomed him with evident pleasure, and the Colonel with all the politeness he could command. All that pertains to the manner and character of a gentleman came in with Mr. Curbing. Mina had discovered him at the Professor's house, and had, without external aid, discerned his

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worth. She felt a quiet confidence in his goodness which made her wish to have him for a friend. He soon felt the power of her confidence and trust, and though a man unwilling to yield to the appeals of others for sympathy, and still more unwilling to accept it for himself, could not resist this appeal from a girl who was beautiful and intelligent and musical, and who seemed to be strangely alone in the world. He made rapid discoveries also, and was compelled to admit that beauty and music had introduced him to a character well worth his attention and study.

A man of rare purity and gentleness had met a woman who compelled him to admit—to himself, of course, and only to himself—that it would be a blessed thing to have a secure place in her heart. Her surroundings and her family had no effect upon him, because he had the happy faculty of regarding men and women, whether his friends or enemies, as separated from all their kin and all their friends, and as having relations with him only. He had never allowed his estimate of any one to be affected by any characteristic or any act of a relative of any degree. Neither was his estimate of himself changed one degree up or down when he considered his own kin.

Curbing was a man of a kind rather rare, who insist upon separateness of life, and live, without reproach, in their own way. When he made Mina his friend he felt that he had enlarged his very small circle of friends considerably, and that he had made a move as satisfactory

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as it was bold. If any of his half-dozen of intimates had insinuated that he was in love with Mina he would have felt that it was his duty to avoid her at any sacrifice; but no one made the charge, and he was left to enjoy undisturbed the luxury of her society. She was his only female friend. Even now, though he strove to deceive himself and think otherwise, he would have abondoned every other friend and relative rather than Mina.

Colonel Schney was not much interested in Curbing, and stayed only long enough to hide his anxiety to go. Business furnished an ample apology. The scene was brighter when he went out, because he left together three people who, though they differed in some things, were in close sympathy in many. They were all pure, all simple-hearted, and all in love with the best things in human nature.

Greatly to the disgust of his more practical friends, Mr. Curbing had devoted a large part of his time to music, and was master of the piano. There were times when he realized that his skill as a musician was rather damaging to him in certain quarters, and if he had been dependent upon patronage of any kind for support, he would have been obliged to abandon or hide his talent. As her father closed the door behind him, Mina rose and took her violin from its case, while Mr. Curbing advanced to the piano, rubbing his hands together and smiling, and immediately struck the first notes of an accompaniment. Mina, standing close beside him, played with a face

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radiant with pleasure. The mysterious sweetness of the violin seemed striving to escape—impatient to be gone and be free—while she restrained it with the measured movements of the bow and soothed it with the soft touch of her fingers. Every note from the piano hastened, in gorgeous livery, to join the train of some beauty escaping from the violin. Curbing answered the appealing tones of the violin by robbing the key-board of all its choicest treasures.

It was the perfection of music, made perfect by the sympathy of the players, and all its weird language was interpreted by the unspoken love in the heart of the woman.

One of Mr. Curbing's peculiarities was his ability to go where he would and do what he would without exciting curiosity. A journey from home, lasting a week or a month, never suggested a farewell, and he could return without the slightest intimation that he had been away. If he had ever had a trouble he had never mentioned it. His pleasures seemed to be complete without exposure or mention to his nearest friends. He belonged to that small and mysterious class of men who enjoy thinking without speaking; can be alone and not lonely; full of information without imparting it; intelligent and capable without showing it; known to everybody and intimate with nobody; without grievous faults or striking virtues; without enemies and with few friends, and exasperatingly contented.

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Everybody supposed but nobody knew that Mr. Curbing had an income sufficient for his support, which came from some source which he had never taken the trouble to mention, and, as he never asked questions, nobody had ever questioned him on this point. His friends knew him too well to do it, and other people did not know him well enough.

People who did not know Mr. Curbing regarded him as a painfully peculiar man, and in return, Mr. Curbing looked upon the bulk of mankind as unbearably peculiar. But even that immense fact did not disturb for a moment his equanimity. He was so determined to be unruffled that he never consented to the idea that he was hungry until he found himself enjoying a good meal, and though quite a traveller, never had his destination so fixed in his plans that he could not with perfect comfort take a train going in the opposite direction. It was said that his hour for retiring was when he was irresistibly sleepy, and that his hour for rising was determined on about the same principle. Everything he had belonged to him and was his servant—never his master. When he had smoked his pipe he laid it down where he was and trusted to luck to find it again. If he didn't find it he didn't care. He read his books, but never worried about them. In his own apartments he left things disarranged to suit himself.

Of course it was not difficult for Mr. Curbing to walk about, the day after his musical evening with Mina, looking as if he had never paid a visit in his life, and never

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would. Occasionally he halted on a corner to let himself strike out in a new direction, without positively selecting it or determining how far he would go, and sometimes after he had started, looked as if he might stop at any moment.

Mr. Curbing seemed to have been made for the very purpose of showing that it is possible for a man to be comfortable. If there was a man anywhere prepared to marry a fortune and get all the good out of it without any of the worry, he was the man. Of course if he married Mina it would come about, in some way, without any very decided resolution on his part. He had an idea that he would marry her, and on one or two occasions came so near fixing on a definite time for it that he was positively excited.

Thus warned, he persisted afterwards in thinking of the matter without reference to time or place. Sometimes, in order to be perfectly composed, he found it necessary to remind himself that it was not absolutely certain that he would marry anybody, anywhere, at any time; and then, as if to illustrate the uncertainties of life, would commence to light a cigar, change his mind and take a pipe, fill it, lay, it down, and, instead of smoking, drink a cup of coffee.

All that was needed to make the peculiarities of Curbing perfectly excusable was that the public should be thoroughly satisfied that he was independent. As long as there was any room for doubt on that point it was

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proper to regard him as a rather worthless sort of fellow, doomed to experience, sooner or later, the sorrows of a man who had wasted in indecision the best years of his life. Many careful estimates of Mr. Curbing's real value as a man, and many wise prophecies concerning his future, were rendered worthless by the fact that no one had considered the possible effect, in his case, of marrying an heiress.

The wise men and the prudent were all wasting their fears. This man without a purpose, who despised order and hated decision, was already selected by Providence to illustrate the value of some traits of character which the world despises as long as possible and worships when it must.

The public objected to Mr. Curbing because he seemed to live without giving the slightest attention to those practical affairs which enslave most men, and because, notwithstanding this evident and serious fault, he succeeded in being quite as comfortable and happy as the most practical and industrious man of business.

Mr. Curbing's eccentricities had a simple and honest origin. He had looked about him very carefully, and had concluded that the practical people were conducting their affairs in a manner perfectly satisfactory to him; that the world in general was getting along pretty well, and that no wisdom or skill such as he possessed was imperatively needed anywhere. He thought, of course, that if anybody had thought he was needed anywhere, he

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would have been told about it. It had never occurred to him that he was of any importance whatever. He was thoroughly worthy and modest, and therefore an unexplained mystery. If he had been as poor as many supposed he was, he would have died from want and neglect, leaving, perhaps, as a legacy to mankind, a song, or a poem, or a story, to live forever. But he had an income, and lived, and wrote nothing. It is probable that he was so happy that fame had no attractions for him.

It is said that men who are to be destroyed are first made mad. It might be said with as much truth, that men who are to be famous are first made miserable. All men who earn the title "great" sweat, as it were, blood.

Mr. Curbing was so determined to be contented and happy, and so much opposed to being destroyed, that he kept himself in a good-humored sanity all the time, and positively declined the most flattering invitations to be miserable. There were times when he had such a realization of the near approach of his wedding with Mina, and felt so certain of it, that all his old tricks failed to restore him to his usual state of uncertainty. Driven to his last resort, he would go out and hunt up a few slight acquaintances, and for two days at a time conduct himself very much like the balance of the world. This always satisfied him that there was still an element of uncertainty in life and in matrimonial intentions, and for a while, at least, relieved him of the feeling that he had absolutely determined to be married. Then he could enjoy a smoke.

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CHAPTER X.

The Public Horrified.

COLONEL SCHNEY having for a long time persisted in actively retiring from public notice, and having energetically refused to take the slightest risk of being nominated for anything whatever, was beginning to be sought after. All intelligent observers could see that there were great vacancies in every direction which could be filled only by the very largest and best men, and that the very best sort of men were unusually hard to find. In such a state of affairs, it was natural that the mention of a vacancy or the necessity for a nomination should suggest at once the fitness of the Colonel.

The Colonel's friends were greatly perplexed by the simple fact that there were several important positions to fill, all needing the best ability, and only one man who seemed designed by Providence to fill either of them, and that man trying his very best to retire into that delightful obscurity which all men, weary and wealthy, crave.

Everybody seemed to be agreed that the Colonel must be again put in the service of the people, the only thing to be decided being in what capacity he could serve to the best advantage. Some very wise men, who had been particularly struck with the wonderful natural powers of the Colonel, thought that he was eminently fitted for the

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bench, though not a trained lawyer, and that if placed there he would be almost invaluable. Others, captivated by the eloquence and logical force of the Colonel's speeches, as described by the Daily Spatterer, were furious at the idea of muzzling him by making him a judge, and warmly in favor of sending him to the Senate. These two wings of the Colonel's army of admirers pushed their respective schemes, and though both propositions were well received by the public, there was a mysterious indifference about the matter which was never explained until it became known that still another influential circle of public-spirited gentlemen had decided that the Colonel must be *made* to accept the nomination of the party for Governor of the State.

When the suggestion came out it created a wild burst of enthusiasm—old inhabitants said the wildest they had ever known—which extended as far as the utmost circulation of the Spatterer could carry it. The man and the occasion had met. The enthusiasm of the people was absolutely uncontrollable. Meetings were held to protest against the necessity for a convention, and urge the Colonel to announce himself at once. All other aspirants promptly withdrew, and some even declared it would be criminal for any man to oppose a candidate who seemed to be nominated by heaven to save the State from imminent, irretrievable ruin. What could the Colonel do?

For once in the history of the State the political machinery came to a stand-still. All idea of a convention was abandoned.

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At a grand dinner, arranged by the leading men of the State, the Colonel was naturally the centre of interest. In a practical, business way, the situation was discussed and all present were made to feel the necessity for a candidate who could command money and who could quiet the fears of all the sensitive factions of the party. It was clearly shown by able speakers that the great mass of intelligent and patriotic people in the State would vote for any one who should happen to be the nominee and that the important thing to do was that which would satisfy the lowest element in the State—those who stubbornly vote to suit themselves and their own interest. Practically the meeting determined to rely upon the conscientious people to do whatever the politicians required, in spite of their personal feelings and interests, and to secure the votes of the wavering and unprincipled by any concessions necessary. As usual, the decent people were requested to abandon their unreasonable prejudices in order that the big-necked and low-browed workers of the leaders might not have their feelings hurt.

The Colonel was unanimously requested to announce himself at once, in order that a vigorous campaign might be immediately planned. It even appeared, from occasional remarks by the speakers, that the campaign was to be a campaign for the education of the people, and that it was to be directed against those people who imagined that they knew things—the intelligent and conceited people—who would always object to some political methods.

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People, for instance, who objected to Colonel Schney on any ground whatever, were to be "slam-banged" and ridiculed by the soft and youthful canvassers until they were thoroughly humiliated, if not absolutely ruined. It was intimated that scores of young men, who hoped some day to be candidates for something on their own account, were ready to take the stump and educate the ignorant people all over the State to such a degree that they would see the importance of a victory though it should be necessary, in order to secure it, to sink every principle of the party and of morals, and elect to the offices of the Commonwealth the scum of the earth. The amount of personal sacrifice that could be secured for use in the campaign was said to be enormous.

All of this enthusiasm was in the papers, whose editors wrote that there was enthusiasm, and read in other papers that there was enthusiasm, and amongst the politicians, who said there was tremendous enthusiasm, and heard other politicians make the same assertion. The editors read each others' writings, and the politicians heard each others' talk, until they thought the whole State was in a ferment. Then the people read the papers and listened to the politicians until each man, feeling utterly indifferent himself, wondered why everybody else was so worked up.

One of the marvels of the century is the fact that millions of perfectly indifferent people, who know they are indifferent can be worked up to a frenzy of excitement simply by being told every day persistently that they are

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in a wild state of enthusiasm. It does not seem strange that a man will believe anything he hears about another, but it is a little remarkable that a man will believe a lie about himself—and gradually conform himself to a lie—which is only another form of the old proverb: "You may as well kill a dog as give him a bad name."

At a subsequent dinner the Colonel reluctantly consented to assume the arduous and distasteful duties and responsibilities so persistently thrust upon him, and in a speech "replete with wisdom, calm, dignified, and impressive" (Spatterer), announced his intention to go to work at once, and, if possible, to lead in the effort to educate the helpless thousands of the Commonwealth into some appreciation of the sagacity and patriotism of those engaged in the campaign.

The fact of the Colonel's acceptance was telegraphed in every direction, and caused another tremendous burst of enthusiasm in the newspapers. When a plain, simple-hearted citizen got his hands on a paper, and read in big type, "SCHNEY ACCEPTS!! UNBOUNDED ENTHUSIASM!" he immediately felt ashamed of himself to find that he was outside of the unbounded enthusiasm, and wondered why he had been made so utterly different from thousands of good people around him. Then possibly he dashed away a tear and resolved to be a better man.

Colonel Schney walked home from that dinner filled with tangled thoughts of the past, the present, and the future; the past dim and shadowy, the present mysterious, and the

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future full of uncertainty and dread. No gleam of brightness entered his heart. The great honor he was about to receive he now knew was more than he could accept with any possible satisfaction to himself. He knew that the honor would be a hollow sham, and that he would be an unhappy fraud, compelled to laugh or to sneer at himself. He actually began to see that his honors were only so many certificates of his willingness to be the tool of others who had discovered and used his weakness and vanity. At the hour when he thought his ambition would be crowned, and his life would open before him in all the beauty of realized hopes, and bid him walk in scented and shady ways from dignity to dignity, he felt instead the clanking irons hammered on by conscience, and lay a prisoner, bereft of hope, in a narrow cell built of his own convictions. With this vision of truth compressing his heart, the Colonel fell asleep to wake no more.

Between midnight and morning a man clad in a workman's garb—young, active, and strong—entered the sleeping man's room, and with two or three long strides, placed himself by the bedside of his victim. He calmly surveyed the Colonel, noting apparently his exact position, gave a careful look at his throat, and then with a firm, slow, heavy hand, drew a wire-edged shoemaker's knife across his throat just above the collar-bone, and on one side, severing like a flash the great artery. Death was instantaneous. In the morning the bed and the man made a sight ghastly enough to shock a coroner.

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It is useless to attempt any description of the distress of his poor wife and daughter. Fortunately Mrs. Schney was so prostrated that unconsciousness came to her relief. Mina suffered with every faculty aroused. After doing all she could for her mother, she dispatched a messenger for Curbing, who soon arrived, and was shown without delay into Mina's own sitting room. What was said in that interview nobody will ever know. In the afternoon they were married in the parlor in the presence of two or three witnesses. That night Mina and her mother occupied apartments at a hotel. Curbing was their guardian. Neither of the women ever entered the old home again.

The papers made every effort to express the horror and indignation of the people at such a cold-blooded piece of butchery. The editors vied with each other in the production of feeling and impressive editorials—The Spatterer probably doing as well as any in the following:

"The shocking death of the Honorable Conrad Schney fills the community with grief and apprehension and inexpressible indignation. The mere announcement is more solemnly impressive than any comments of ours could be. How a man of such singular purity and gentleness can rouse the hatred of anything human must remain always a mystery. If such a man, whose whole life has been an illustration of the possibilities of goodness in humanity can fall a victim to diabolical hatred, who of us is safe from the assassin's knife?

"We cannot refrain from expressing the hope that the

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cold-blooded miscreant who perpetrated the deed may have swift justice meted out to him.

"In a future article we hope to do full justice to the distinguished life and services of our lamented friend.

"In the meantime the vital interests of a great Commonwealth go unguarded—a prey to the first adventurer who discovers the absence of the great-hearted leader of her cohorts.

"For the particulars of this terrible affair, we refer our readers to our local column."

The opposition paper very briefly announced that "Colonel Schney, the leader of our friends of the other side, well known on account of his wealth and his ability to win by fair means or foul, and who was recently nominated for gubernatorial honors in opposition to Judge Transient, has been murdered in bed at home. *Requiescat, etc.*

"Particulars in telegraphic column."

While the police hunted for the murderer, arrangements for the funeral were pushed forward with diligence until everything was complete. It was a great success.

It was quite pleasant to be a pall-bearer, because, of course, only the most prominent men in the community would do. For a long time afterwards, if a man said "Brown," and some one said "What Brown?" the answer would be, "Why, Brown, you know, who was pall-bearer for Honorable Conrad Schney." The plumes on the hearse were tall and black, and nodded, so the papers said, with

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remarkable solemnity. Four white horses drew the hearse, stepping, neighing, and tossing their heads in perfect unison with all the other beautiful arrangements. In consideration of the passage of the procession the sun stopped behind a large bank of clouds and allowed the day to be singularly gloomy.

The preacher did his part manfully in a sermon on national calamities and the lessons they ought to convey.

When the funeral was all over almost everybody was convinced that there must have been some good reason for such a general demonstration, but no one man could be found who was willing to say that he knew what the reason was and that he was actuated by it when he followed the crowd.

Though the Spatterer had expressed the fear that the Colonel's death might result in some awful and unprecedented disaster to the Commonwealth, everything moved along with wonderful regularity.

Within a week after the funeral, thanks to the kind heart and cool head of Curbing, Mina and her mother were in a hired house of their own, far away from the Stemmery and its horrible associations.

Anybody could see by the pleased expressions on the faces of the police that the murderer was safely in jail, with a good case against him. Suspicion, arrest, and confinement had been followed by such an accumulation of evidence, that the daily papers had tried and condemned and were ready to hang the man in their columns right

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away. They had all they wanted except the prisoner's name. This they could not discover, and the prisoner quietly refused to divulge it. The reporters denounced him for keeping his mouth shut and refusing to assist them in their vigorous prosecution. Some of them would go down every day to see him, feed him, treat him to cigars, chat with him, shake hands with him, and be sociable generally, and the next day give the diameter of his neck, his weight, the probable fall necessary to break his neck, and the chances of his choking to death, and wind up with a technical description of the rope and the gallows.

Some one unknown paid the keeper of a restaurant to furnish the prisoner three abundant and luxurious meals every day. He ate them regularly, and three times a day said, Thank God! Some one sent the prisoner clean underclothes of good quality and provided regularly for his washing. He had from the same mysterious source a clean bed and snow-white sheets. Flowers came to him, and books and papers, all evidently from the same person. A lawyer, experienced and able, whose large fee was already paid, visited him regularly. The only emotion the prisoner displayed was intense gratitude to his unknown friend. There was no remorse, no fear, no anger about him. And there was no curiosity or anxiety about his own fate. He was thoughtful, serene, reserved, and quiet.

Soon after his arrest, his counsel called on him, and

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being struck with his handsome and youthful face, questioned him in a very gentle and sympathetic way.

"My son," he said, "are you guilty of this crime?"

"Do you command me, as my counsel, to answer?" said the man.

"No; you will answer or not, as you please."

"Then I will not answer."

"What is your name?"

"My name? I will not reveal it as long as there is any chance for life."

"You think you will be convicted?"

"Yes—I—think—I am satisfied I will be."

"Have you any friends?"

"Not one—that is to say, none who will know that I am here or who will come to me."

"Do you desire to see any one that you love?"

"Yes, I would give the world to see my mother, and I would kiss the feet of the man who sent me clean clothes and who feeds me."

"Is you mother living? Do you know where she is?"

"If I did not know I would not be here. Yes, she is alive!"

"Would you let me bring her to you?"

"Not for my life. I would not have her or any friend to suffer with me for one moment or—see me here. I will bear this alone."

"How has your past life been? You do not talk like a hardened man or a wicked man."

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"No, not wicked, but inwardly stormy. I have suffered, and have grown to be what I am under pain. I am as free from malice and vice as a child. I have no unkind feelings towards any one."

"Do you appreciate the danger of your position—feel the—the—that your chances for escape are hardly worth considering? I cannot encourage you to hope; you must not expect too much from me."

"I will never blame you. Indeed, I thank you now in advance for all you will do. The only help I need is a messenger who will carry my grateful thanks to those who have sent me comforts."

"Do you propose, in the event that you are convicted, to explain yourself at all?"

"Possibly I may tell who I am, but no more. I must be satisfied with the judgment of the world. *I* understand it all but cannot hope to be understood. In my own defense I will be silent. To say the only things I could say would be more painful than death."

When the prisoner was brought before the police court he got a pretty good idea of the intense feeling against him in the community. He had sense enough to see that the public had determined to prosecute him with vigor and dispatch. The police justice, who was a pompous ignoramus, decided legal points with an easy, off-hand facility which would have been amusing if the issue had not been of life or of death. Besides being naturally intolerant and rather brutal, the justice felt that the dignity of the victim justified the roughest treatment of the pris-

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oner which it was in his power to inflict. He conducted the examination with an ominous frown on his massive brow, keeping the corners of his mouth well drawn down, and succeeded, several times, in making the venerable counsel feel very much ashamed of himself and of the law.

The prisoner's counsel was glad when he escaped from the place, because, as he said, neither common sense or law had any show there. The prisoner remarked on his way back to jail that he might be hanged, but it was some consolation to know that he had been to the police court for the last time. He said he could stand his part of the outrage, but hated to see his old friend, the lawyer, so shamefully battered about by the insolent justice.

The Spatterer, in its capacity of leading journal and general exponent of everybody's views, was clearly of the opinion that a blood-thirsty villain like the prisoner ought to be tried promptly and hung as soon as convenient. It sent out reporters to look for second-hand gallows and to hunt up good rope; published expert comments on slip knots, traps, necessary drop, comparative chances for strangulation and broken neck, and even suggested the proper disposition of the body. It did not know exactly or positively, but it had no doubt that the prisoner's past life had been one unbroken series of abominable crime. It was convinced that a man who could eat and sleep and look as serene as the prisoner did, must be a heartless monstrosity.

The Spatterer also held up daily for public admiration

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sketches of the life of the distinguished victim, dwelling with irresistible pathos upon his unprecedented purity and gentleness, and telling, with every appearance of quiet truthfulness, of splendid deeds of charity now for the first time made public. But all these things were nothing compared with the fact that this man, so richly endowed, had spent a long life in unselfish service of the people, forgetful of everything but the public good. In fact, this murderer had just gone and, with one stroke of a shoemaker's knife, made the public a *perfectly inconsolable and helpless orphan!* The Spatterer thought that the trial ought to be, and would be, a mere form, to be followed by the satisfactory reality of a well-arranged hanging.

Of course, with everything arranged beforehand, the trial was a simple affair. The jury knew what they were expected to do. The witnesses were few and their testimony brief and convincing. When the points of law made by counsel were difficult, and the judge did not know what to do, he adjourned the court until next day and asked somebody who did know. The next day he would decide with a promptness almost startling.

The prisoner convinced every one who saw him, except those who were resolved to hang him, that he was a modest, rather gentle, quiet man. As he sat in court, as calm as the judge himself, his face was read by thousands who came and went. No one read anything there but deep sadness. His whole figure suggested lonesome helplessness. Of all the throng that pressed him, not

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one stretched a hand to help him; there was no eye that pitied him; not one word of sympathy fell on his ear. Murderer though he was, there must have been some tonic in his heart which enabled it to beat on in the midst of almost brutal indifference. Excepting his counsel, he had not been approached by a single friend. Though he might deserve the penalty in store for him, it is doubtful if he deserved this cruel isolation. The verdict was guilty.

The trial fixed the crime upon the prisoner beyond a doubt. His counsel abandoned the idea of appeal, and urged him to prepare at once for the final scene.

When the prisoner was arraigned to receive sentence, and was asked if he had anything to say why sentence should not be pronounced, he turned to the crowd in the court-room and searched every face within reach of his vision, his countenance growing rapidly sadder and sadder. Having finished his survey, he turned again to the judge and said: "My heart is full of strange emotions—new and startling. I would, but cannot, express them. There is no language for what I feel. I think if I could lay my head on my mother's bosom she would interpret my tears. No other heart but hers is worthy or able to know my anguish now. I am done."

The prisoner disappeared, and was only of occasional interest until the fatal day arrived and launched him into eternity.

The Spatterer reluctantly published nine columns of the details.

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CHAPTER XI.

Concluding with a Medley.

THE information which the public received from the time the prisoner was sentenced until his execution was derived mainly from the columns of the Spatterer. The able reporters of that journal, feeling that they had arrested, tried and convicted the prisoner, and would probably be compelled to keep the officials up to the duty of hanging him, paid regular visits to the jail, and did all in their power to keep the indignation of the public warmed up. They said that the prisoner's assumption of gentle manners was the most superb acting it had ever been their pleasure to study, and that his personal cleanliness, politeness, and serenity were only the cute tricks of villainy. One reporter stated positively that he had seen him eating as naturally as the most innocent man in the community. Another member of the staff informed the public that he had tested the prisoner's feelings by giving him a graphic description of the last bungling execution in the jail, in which the man was cruelly strangled, and that at the conclusion *the prisoner smiled.*

All of the reporters agreed that the prisoner had never shown a symptom of fear; that he had never asked a favor or courted the sympathy of a single human being. Nobody had noticed a word or a look that indicated the

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slightest interest in his own case. The reporters all omitted to say that the prisoner had politely snubbed them every one, and that all their efforts to bully him and break down his self-respect had signally failed.

The prisoner was repeatedly urged to prepare a statement for the press, but regularly declined, saying, by way of explanation, that the conduct of the reporters who had visited him demonstrated the fact that any statement he might make would be remorselessly used against him.

It was evident that the prisoner had a thorough appreciation of the bitterness of the public, realized fully that he was abandoned, regarded his fate as fixed, and was waiting without impatience or weariness for the end. To the last he refrained from uttering a word of complaint or regret.

As the day for the execution drew near, the Spatterer became more and more anxious to have a full confession from the murderer to lay before its readers. The editors and owners evidently felt that they owed it to their thousands of subscribers, and ought to have it if it could be obtained. After writing several very able editorials—intended to whet the appetite of the public—in which they set forth the great value of confessions in general, and of murderers' confessions in particular, they prepared one more, which was clearly intended to convince the prisoner that he owed it to the community—now about to choke him to death—to vindicate their wisdom and justice by a full confession of his bloody crime. The editor

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thought it would be really mean for the man to allow himself to be hung without relieving the community of a certain feeling of uncertainty which oppressed it, and therefore urged him to lay aside his morbid interest in his merely personal affairs, and write something really satisfactory for the columns of the Spatterer. In conclusion, the editor thought that after a little reflection, the prisoner would see the reasonableness of their request.

Finding that their appeals to the public spirit of the prisoner had no effect, and that he persisted in his selfish determination to remain silent, the Spatterer flatly declared that it was done with him, and would print nothing from his pen except at full schedule rates. He was also informed by indirect remarks that his ingratitude to the press had convinced the people of his guilt as thoroughly as if he had written and signed his confession.

According to the account of the Spatterer, the execution was a very ordinary affair. The members of the staff said they had tried very hard to feel some interest in the prisoner, but that he had been so distant and reserved, and had manifested such lack of confidence in the justice and fairness and consideration of the press, that they really found it unpleasant to write up the details. But for the fact that the condemned man had, at the last moment revealed his name, and thus simply justified their vigorous prosecution of the case, they would have passed the matter by with a simple statement that the criminal had duly paid the penalty of his crime.

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After the black cap was drawn over his face the prisoner said: "Is this the last moment?"

"Yes," said the sheriff; "do you wish to say anything?"

"Only this,' replied the prisoner, "and I beg you to note it well: "My name is Filter, and you will find my mother at the almshouse."

In the evening his mother came down and wept over the body. As she was about to depart she took from her bosom, where it had been long concealed, her engagement ring. A diamond flashed upon it. Handing it to a gentleman standing by, she begged him to spend it upon the burial of her boy. The next day the ring was returned to her with a note to the effect that her boy had received decent burial at the hands of a friend, who would not forget the mother.

The Spatterer, after a brief account of the execution and of the insolent appearance of the abandoned mother at the jail, proceeded to unravel the motives of the wretch who "so cruelly murdered our late distinguished fellow-citizen, and had at last suffered the just penalty of the law."

"The prisoner's announcement of his name," the Spatterer thought, was exceedingly fortunate, because it relieved the whole affair of doubt and completely cleared up the mystery.

"Years ago, when Colonel Schney was a prosperous merchant, and before he had entered upon his brilliant career as a statesman, he had lavished his means upon an

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unprincipled wretch by the name of Filter. All his friendly efforts were futile. In spite of almost princely aid from his noble benefactor, Filter sunk lower and lower until he was recognized as a worthless inebriate utterly beyond help. After he had exhausted the sympathy and wasted the lavish benefactions of Colonel Schney, Filter gradually conceived the idea that Schney had robbed and ruined him. His bitter denunciations of his disinterested friend sunk into the minds of his wife and children, and, it seems, produced terrible fruit.

"Filter finally died in a drunken debauch, and his wife and children disappeared mysteriously from the community. We have since learned that the younger children died; that the eldest went to sea, and that the mother, a bad woman, we are told, landed at last in the almshouse.

"A day or two before the murder a man, now known to have been Filter, applied at the almshouse for information concerning the woman, Filter, and her children, and was informed of the death of the children. When asked if he desired to see Mrs. Filter, he replied that he might call again, later, to see her, but was then too busy to stop.

"The man's life, the facts developed during the trial, and all that we have learned since the execution—everything—points to the conclusion that Filter, when he cut the throat of our amiable and worthy friend, *thought* he was avenging his father's ruin, the death of his little brother and sister, and the long years of poverty and humiliation and suffering which his mother had endured.

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"How mysterious are the ways of that Providence which permits the progeny of vice to live to gather strength and venom sufficient to slay matured wisdom while it snatches a few moments of rest from unselfish labor!

"Young Filter, returning from his aimless wanderings, learns of his mother's distress and of the death of her children. Prepared probably by a previous course of vice, he resolves upon the death of his father's best friend, and almost immediately proceeds to the execution of his resolve.

"The public has learned from our columns how well he did the ghastly work."

While the trial was progressing, the circulation of the Spatterer was immense, and when the excitement subsided the proprietors found that they had secured, as a net result, nineteen new subscribers.

Curbing got so tired of the paper and what it said about him and his wife and his fortune, and "the distinguished career of our late friend," that he got Tinkle to buy the plant and good-will, sold the plant to a junk-shop, burnt up the good-will, and had afterwards a few months' rest.

It was not long before everybody found out that Curbing, though not quite as wealthy as his wife, had a handsome fortune of his own, and that many of his peculiarities, which had been regarded as ridiculous eccentricities, were simply the natural manner of a man who consulted

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his own pleasure and comfort, with utter indifference to the opinions of a public of which he was entirely independent.

After the incineration of the Spatterer very little was said about the deceased Colonel, but the remaining papers did their best to keep Curbing and his wife before the public. They called attention to the fact that Mr. Curbing, though abundantly able to conduct a handsome establishment, was still residing in a small rented house, and that he was conducting himself in a quiet, gentlemanly way quite surprising. They mentioned the fact that his wife was extremely modest and unassuming; that she was beautiful and wealthy and accomplished; that she was charitable and pious, and, to all appearances, happy. All of these things about Mina, and some few things about Curbing, they repeated until they began to realize that it was simply ridiculous. They tried every way to find something new to say, but Curbing was too smart for them. He and his wife managed almost without an effort to do nothing remarkable enough to excuse a mention of it in the papers. Curbing actually paid one or two of the "personal" reporters to let him alone. This he did purely for the benefit of his friends, because he never read the local papers except by accident.

Fortunately there were some things which the reporters never discovered which would have made good items, and would have proved that Curbing was still going right along doing what he considered to be the right thing to do without consulting the press.

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Curbing was leading and Mina was following with all her heart. They had so simplified the ordinarily cumbrous arrangements of home that they were free to go and come as fancy suggested, and to devote as much time as they pleased to congenial employments. They had one secret. They had agreed that their joint wealth should be at the instant disposal of each, without question or account. Not a word passed between them by way of explanation, but they understood each other perfectly. Every dollar they had was pledged to cure, as far as possible, any pain or sorrow which could be traced to a source in Schney's old business.

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CHAPTER XII.

In Which We Part.

MR. AND MRS. Curbing had their own ideas of comfort. Three times each day a man servant appeared and placed a simple meal on the table. When the meal was finished every trace of it disappeared. One servant woman kept the house in order. Nobody went to market or to the grocer's. The caterer who supplied the table understood that he was to be paid handsomely, and was expected to provide elegantly. Curbing wanted time to read, time for music, and time to think. Mina wanted time to pet and console her mother and run around with her husband. Both of them wanted time to spend money on all sorts of people. They had no time to keep house.

Mr. Curbing always confessed that he was not a practical man, and had no desire to be one. With the cheerful consent of his wife and her mother, he placed his fortune and hers in the hands of a good trust company, and never bothered himself further than to check for what he wanted. His wife also learned to draw checks. They literally paid their way over or around all the ordinary annoyances of life, and lived for the higher pleasures of mind and heart.

The old lady gave the Stemmery mansion to the trustees of "The Home for Crippled Children," and Mina and Curbing endowed the home handsomely. It was soon

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occupied by a throng of frail orphans of both sexes, all deformed or mutilated, and all as happy as love and bounty could make them.

Mrs. Filter was there charged with the duty of loving the children as much like a mother as possible. This was all that she was expected to do. She had a separate endowment. Whenever Curbing saw the diamond he was tempted to tell her that he saved it for her, but he never spoke of it.

When Curbing first proposed to Mina to feed the prisoner and send him clothing, she was surprised, but soon recognized the suggestion as perfectly in keeping with her husband's character, and finally became his active partner in the work. She added books and flowers and snow-white bedding. When she was told that young Filter was the murderer, she fell upon her husband's neck and thanked him again and again for having suggested a simple charity which, she said, would make her happier than she had ever hoped to be. This pleased Curbing, and induced him to confess that he employed and paid the counsel for the defense. A long time afterwards he told Mina that he recognized Filter soon after his arrest, and, being convinced of his motive, determined at once to defend him and to look after his comfort in jail, because he knew that when all was known it would be a comfort to her. He said he had even then no doubt of the prisoner's guilt, and no idea that he could escape the penalty.

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Mina was the only human being he ever told about his visit to the jail to rescue the body from the anatomy students of the college. When he told of his good fortune in receiving the ring, and the pleasure he had in restoring it to Mrs. Filter, Mina was ready to fall on her knees in tearful worship.

From this hour Mina's life was an unending succession of happy scenes, thrown up into captivating beauty by the soft background of all her old sorrows. Curbing was the light of her life.

There was one room in Mr. Curbing's house which would make a stranger suspect that the owner was a dealer in musical instruments. But nothing there was for sale. Every battered thing was an old relic dear to the master and the mistress of the house. Curbing was peculiar in this, that he would not, for any consideration, sell an old friend even in the shape of a guitar that was warped, or a violin crushed and voiceless. That room was Professor Snuff's nearest approach, in life, to heaven. Curbing spent large sums of money on surgeons and on appliances, and held not his hand until the Professor was furnished with a new aluminum spine, which, in conjunction with sundry straps and devices, actually enabled the old gentleman to sit up, and even to ride in Curbing's carriage to Curbing's house and sit at Curbing's table and eat Curbing's fine fare. When he was the guest Mina was the maid who danced attendance. Curbing was the happy butler and man of all work. The Professor was himself

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again. Did that trio make any music? Listen! and you may hear it now.

There was another room which Curbing called "the chapel." It was Mina's. Those who were permitted to see it said it was pure and sweet and simple. Curbing never entered it without assuming the attitude and manner of a guest who knew the importance of conducting himself modestly and appreciated the delicate hospitality of the place. And yet it was just there that he was altogether at home.

There was still another room, the largest of all, which was absolutely the property of Mr. Curbing. In it disorder reigned. There were boxes of smoking tobacco almost everywhere. Seated in any chair in the room a visitor could easily reach a pipe and tobacco or pick up several varieties of cigars. Match boxes of every size and shape were as plentiful as if the business of life was mainly to light pipes. To secure himself against having to hunt for a match, Mr. Curbing kept a small gas jet burning, and near by it a Japanese jar of orange wood ribbons. There were chairs in the room made evidently to sit in. They were ingeniously designed and well constructed, and a solace and surprise to those who, for the first time, tested their ability to rest the human frame. Books were there, of course, and tempting magazines with the leaves uncut. Pictures of small cost, in all sorts of odd frames, were hung up and laid about everywhere. They had merit or meaning. Whenever Mr. Curbing be-

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gan to feel that he was certainly married, and that Mina was no longer his sweetheart only, but his wife forever, he would go to this room and spend an hour or two trying to feel uncertain about it. While there he would laugh right out, a thing he rarely ever did, and examine all his broken pipes with evident interest and curiosity. Knowing that nobody was watching him he walked from picture to picture and gazed at each one until he was satisfied. After assuring himself that several old books that he loved were still there, and that nobody had disturbed anything since his last visit, he would close the door and rejoin his wife with an air of embarrassment which she always understood. He was always afraid that she might ask him if he had been to his room, and that he would have to confess. But Mina was no fool; she was too happy to be a fool.

Mrs. Schney slowly faded away, and died saying, "Thank you, my dear."

Judge Transient gained an easy victory over Estimate, who was nominated in place of Schney, and the State fell into the hands of her worst foes.

All the dangerous elements of the voting population which had made Colonel Schney a possibility and his candidacy a necessity, went over to the opposition and did all they could to bring on what now seemed to be irretrievable ruin.

This overwhelming calamity revived the memory of the Colonel, and caused many a disappointed politician to curse the name of Filter. They all declared that if Schney had lived the result would have been reversed.

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On the same principle it might be said that if young Filter, the murderer, had died when the other children starved, the result might have been different. Or, to go back further still, if the elder Filter had not wasted his fortune, and had not died a drunkard, but had lived to provide for his wife and children, that would have changed the result.

Every misfortune has deep roots well buried in the past. The bitter fruit of to-day comes from a seed long since planted, perhaps by the hand of some one dead and forgotten. Evil needs no cultivation. Good and evil mixed is pure evil. Virtue never compromises; if it does, it is no longer virtue, but vice. The science of compromise is the devil's specialty.

Schney cut his own throat; his party defeated itself and—ruined a Commonwealth.

They call the baby Pauline.

FINIS.

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